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25.

CHRISTIANS GREAT INTEREST.

IN TWO PARTS.

I. THE TRIAL OF A SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST.
II. THE WAY HOW TO ATTAIN IT.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM GUTHRIE,
Late Minister of the Gospel at Finwick.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED

MEMOIRS OF THE AUTHOR;

A PREFACE BY THE REV. MR. ROBERT TRAILL,

AND OTHER

Recommendatory Introductions.

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. 2 Pet. i. 10.
Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be the reprobates? 2 Cor. xiii. 5.
I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine. Song vi. 3.

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MEMOIRS

OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF

WILLIAM GUTHRIE.

Mr. William Guthrie was eldest son to the Laird of Pitforthy, in the shire of Angus, a cadet of the old family of Guthrie; and by the mother's side descended from the ancient house of Easter Ogle, of which she was a daughter: whereby he enjoyed such advantages of birth as, at least, raised him above the contempt of those who gave the highest value to nobleness of blood, and dote most fondly on the antiquity of families. God blessed his parents with a numerous offspring, so that he had three sisters-german, and four brothers, all of which, except one, dedicated themselves to the service of God in the gospel of his Son: namely, Robert, who was licensed to preach, but never ordained to a parochial charge, his tender constitution, and numerous infirmities, rendering him unequal for so laborious an office, and bringing him soon to an end of his days. Alexander, who became minister of the parish of Strickathrow, in the presbytery of Brechin in Angus, about the year 1645, where he continued a pious and

useful laborer in the work of the gospel, till the introduction of Prelacy; which unhappy change of our constitution affected him in the tenderest manner, and is thought to have shortened his days, and contributed to his death, *anno* 1661. And John, the youngest son, minister of Torbolton, in the shire of Air, in which post he remained till he was turned out at the Restoration for non-conformity, and had his share of the violence and cruelty which then reigned; till, in the year 1669, he was removed to the better world of peace and joy. And as it was a very distinguished honor to this family, that of five sons, four of them should have devoted themselves to the noblest employment of human nature, the ministry of reconciliation, and the promoting the eternal happiness of perishing souls; so no doubt it was one of the most pleasing circumstances in the life of our author, and could not but mightily heighten the endearments of a natural relation to his brothers, that they were at the same time brethren in the ministry, and united in the peculiar service of their common Lord.

He was born at Pitforthy in the year 1620; and no sooner got beyond the bloom of infancy, but he gave proofs of his capacity and genius, by very quick and considerable advances in the Latin and Greek tongues. After which he was sent to the university of St. Andrew's, where he studied philosophy under the memorable Mr. James Guthrie, who was afterwards minister at Stirling; and became so famous by his uncommon zeal for the liberty and religion of his

country, and by his being made one of the earliest sacrifices to the growing tyranny of King Charles II.'s reign. The scholar, being the master's relation, was entitled to his peculiar care, lodged, when at the college, in the same chamber with him, and had thereby the principles of learning infused into him with more accuracy and advantage than his class-fellows, in conjunction with a constant regard to God and religion, and early impressions of piety; and no doubt this happy situation contributed not a little to the usual progress he made in all the parts of university studies.

Having taken the degree of Master of Arts, he applied himself for some years to the study of divinity, under the direction of Mr. Samuel Rutherford. After which, being entered upon trials, which he underwent with great applause, he was licensed to preach the gospel in August 1642. And, according to Mr. Traill's account, he not only happily improved in the theological learning under Mr. Rutherford, as professor of divinity, but the ministry of that good man, so justly celebrated for his affecting and lively preaching, and holy life, was, by the blessing of God, made the instrument, if not of his conversion, which his early piety gives us ground to believe was sooner effected, at least of great advances in a religious life, which was so endeared to his soul, that he resolved to devote himself to the immediate service of God in the office of the holy ministry; and in consequence of that pious resolution, he gave an uncommon instance of mortification to the world, and with how ardent

a zeal he designed to give himself wholly to the work of the gospel, in quitting his paternal estate to the only brother of the five who was not engaged in the sacred office, that thereby he himself might be perfectly disentangled from the affairs of this life, and entirely employed in those of the eternal world. Soon after his being licensed, he left St. Andrew's, accompanied with the high esteem and approbation of the professors of that university, which they gave proof of, by a recommendation, conceived in terms so full and strong, that they bore the character of an inward regard and value, more than the form of a customary testimonial. After this, he became governor to my Lord Mauchlin, eldest son to the Earl of Lowdon, Chancellor of Scotland; in which station he continued till he entered upon a parochial charge, of which this was the occasion.

He was employed to preach in Galstoun upon a preparation-day, before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and where several members of the new erected parish of Finwick being present, they were so much edified by his sermon, and conceived so just a value for him, that they immediately resolved to make choice of him for their minister; and, in consequence hereof, gave him a very harmonious call; which Mr. Guthrie having complied with, he was ordained to the sacred office in that parish, November 7, 1644. In this place he had peculiar difficulties to struggle with, and many circumstances of his ministry extremely discouraging; and yet, through the divine blessing, the gospel preached by him, had surprising success, and became in an emi-

nent manner, the wisdom and power of God to the salvation of lost souls.

As this was a new erected parish, and Mr. Guthrie the first pastor of it, the people had been very much neglected, and had not enjoyed the means of grace with that ease and advantage which others were favoured with: the melancholy effects whereof, were evidently discernible in the rudeness and gross ignorance of many of them; and, consequently, in a too general neglect of God and religion.

But under all these disadvantages, that heavenly zeal for the glory of his great master, which animated the labours of this excellent minister, his fervent love to the souls of men dying in their sins, and his holy wisdom and diligence in reclaiming and instructing them, were so honoured in God, and accompanied with the powerful influences of his Holy Spirit, that in a little time a noble change was wrought upon a barbarous multitude; they were almost all persuaded to attend the public ordinances, to set up and maintain the stated worship of God in their families; and scarce was there a house in the whole parish that did not bring forth some fruits of his ministry, and afford some real converts to a religious life. And thus he was made the instrument of many notable triumphs of victorious grace, which Jesus Christ leads over the souls of obstinate transgressors, when he turns them from their ways, and subdues the people under him. And what can be more worthy of everlasting remembrance than such glorious achievements in the spiritual warfare, and successful

battles with the implacable enemy of the happiness of mankind, and the kingdom of their Maker? which will one day shine with an eternal lustre, and be celebrated with louder and more lasting acclamations of an endless world, than the fading honour of an earthly diadem, or the bravest actions and most finished victory of any of the heroes of war, who make now such noise and bustle upon the stage; and how little needed the man we are now speaking of to envy the dazzling pomp and show of this earth, or to be desirous of its richest treasures? He possessed another portion, since almost every family in his parish, however little and obscure, afforded a shining ornament for that divine crown of glory and rejoicing, which shall be beautified with the lustre of an eternal excellency and be, by the triumphant King of the church, bestowed upon all those who have turned many unto righteousness.

Mr. Guthrie was possessed of all these qualities which became a minister of the gospel; and, being accompanied by the powerful influences of divine grace, gave a happy prospect of uncommon success: for, besides his excellent endowments which were discovered in the pulpit, he was eminently fitted to improve, for the edification of his people, the ministerial duties of visiting and catechising; in performing whereof, he joined an indefatigable diligence to a holy skill, knew how to embrace every opportunity of discoursing upon the most important and awful subjects, in a plain and familiar manner, and of recommending religion to the consciences of every one in the way which their special circum-

stances called for. And it was his peculiar care to endear the ways of God to the youth of his parish, and give them early impressions of an eternal world, before the devil and their lusts had seized upon their hearts, and enslaved them: and the seed of grace, that was thus sown during the spring of life, was, through the divine blessing, preserved in many as they advanced in years, and brought forth much fruit. Nor did Mr. Guthrie neglect, in visiting poor families, to join works of charity to his instructions, and imitate his great Master, in showing compassion both to the bodies and souls of men. By all which winning methods he engaged their esteem and affections, which could not fail to add a mighty force to his exhortations and reproofs.

He excelled also in that useful mean of knowledge, catechising; and avoided those mistakes, in the management of this exercise, which frequently lessen the advantage thereof. His questions were mostly confined to such truths of the doctrine according to godliness as were recommended by their great importance, and extensive influence upon practical religion; herein confining himself to the apostolical injunction, by insisting upon these things which were good and profitable unto men, and avoiding foolish and trifling questions that were vain and useless: and knowing that it was his business to feed the meanest and weakest of the Christian flock with wholesome instructions, he adapted these exercises to the lowest capacities; began with the most easy and obvious truths of religion, and

so prepared the way for those which required a more enlightened understanding. He was careful not to expose the ignorant, so as to beget a distaste in them of the means of knowledge, nor to confound the modest and bashful, but by his meekness and condescension he encouraged and engaged them; whereby catechising became a pleasure to them and he had the joy to see useful and solid knowledge spreading itself among a people whom he found grossly ignorant.

His own experience in the ways of God, and the great depths of troubles and sorrows, doubts and fears, whereby awakened consciences are exercised, into which, he himself was often plunged, eminently qualified him for assisting and comforting others in the like circumstances, for strengthning the weak hands, and confirming the feeble knees; and could not miss to beget in him that affectionate concern for poor souls, those bowels of tenderness and sympathy, which can never be found with any but such who themselves have had a feeling acquaintance with the methods of the spiritual life, and the work of the Holy Spirit in their own hearts and lives. And it were easy to enlarge upon the uncommon dexterity which this excellent person had in improving sickness, and the approaches of the King of Terrors, to the advantage of those who were exposed to them; so that though instances of a death-bed repentance rarely happen, and it be indeed infinite madness to delay to the last hour that work, which is of eternal consequence, yet there wanted not evidences of the divine blessing upon his endeavors to reclaim sinners, and call them to God, even in the last hour.

It would be justly blameable if we neglected to mention one other noble quality of Mr. Guthrie's. The state of his health made it necessary for him to use frequent and vigorous exercises; and this made him choose fishing and fowling for his common recreations; but as he was always animated by a flaming zeal for the glory of his blessed Master, and a tender compassion to the souls of men, and as it was the principal thing made him desire life and health, that he might employ them in propagating the kingdom of God, and turning transgressors from their evil ways, so the very hours of his recreation were dedicated to this purpose; which was so endeared to him, as he knew how to make his diversions subservient to the nobler ends of his ministry: he made them the occasions of familiarizing his people to him and introducing himself to their affections; and, in the disguise of a sportsman, he gained some to a religious life, whom he could have little influence upon in a minister's gown; of which there happened several memorable examples.

Some of the parish were so extremely rude and barbarous that they never attended upon divine worship, and knew not so much as the face of their pastor; to such, every thing that regarded religion was distasteful; a minister would have been enough to have frightened them, nor could he have access either to visit or catechise them. But what Mr. Guthrie might have almost otherwise have dispaired of, he effectuated by his diversions: in the habit which he then wore, he conciliated the esteem and love even of

those ignorant creatures, made use of their curiosity, as well as of nobler arguments, to bring them to the church, and enter them into the paths of salvation; so that the pulpit was the first place which discovered to them that it was their minister himself who had allured them thither; and so condescending a method of gaining them, procured a constant attendance upon public ordinances, and was at length accompained by the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ unto the praise of God. Thus, in imitation of the great apostle, being crafty, he caught them with guile. And this heavenly wisdom and dexterity will be one day celebrated with juster applauses by the assembly of the first-born, than the cunningest stratagems, or the bravest attempts, which raise the character of princes and generals, whose fame flies now swiftest and widest through the world.

Thus his eminent abilities and unwearied diligence in the work of the ministry, continued to exert themselves with distinguished success; they procured the universal love of his parish; and he lived for one and twenty years in such perfect harmony with his session, that during all that time there happened not the smallest difference betwixt them.

His family affairs were also very easy and comfortable to him. August 1645, he was happily married to Agnes Campbell, daughter to David Campbell of Skeldon, in the shire of Air, a remote branch of the family of Lowdon; a gentlewoman endowed with all these qualities that could render her a blessing to her

husband, having joined to a handsome shape and comely features, good sense and good breeding, sweetened by a modest cheerfulness of temper, and, what endeared her to Mr. Guthrie beyond every thing else, sincere piety; so that they lived a little more than twenty years in the most complete friendship, and with a constant mutual satisfaction, founded upon the noblest principle, one faith, one hope, one baptism, and a sovereign love to Jesus Christ, which zealously inspired them both. By her he had six children, two of them only out lived him, both daughters, who were eminent for their sincere piety, and endeavoured to follow the example of their excellent parents. One of them was married to Miller, of Glenlee, a gentleman in the shire of Air; and the other was married to the Rev. Mr. Patrick Warner, December 1681, when the tyranny and cruelty of the times were growing to their height; and so she soon became a companion to him in tribulation, imprisonment, and banishment, for the truth's sake, till the glorious revolution, when Mr. Warner was settled minister of the gospel, at Irvine. Both he and she arrived at a great age, in patient waiting till their change. Their children were William Warner, of Adeir, in the shire of Air; and Margaret Warner, who was married to Mr. Robert Wodrow, minister of the gospel at Eastwood, to whom we are obliged for the materials from which this account of Mr. Guthrie's life is composed.

We have given a short account of Mr. Guthrie's eminent ministerial endowments, as they appeared in the discharge of the pastoral office

among his own people, and of the glorious successes wherewith God blessed his zealous love and unwearied diligence; but this was not the sole character which he excelled in; for in every other capacity he gave equal proofs of his superior accomplishments.

He was distinguished in the judicatures of the church, from which he never allowed himself to be absent, by a thorough knowledge of our constitution, an heroic courage and firmness whenever the cause of truth and holiness was concerned; and that modest regard for others, and affection to his brethren, which endeared him to them, and qualified him for the business and duties of society.

When that unhappy distinction between the public Resolutioners and the Protestors found place in the church, Mr. Guthrie thought it his duty to be of the last denomination; yet he took care that his angry passions did not embitter his zeal, which he tempered with a constant moderation, and sweetened with an ardent love to peace. He preached with his brethren of different sentiments; and warmly entertained every thing that had a tendency to union, and could give a prospect of an accommodation. The power of divine grace, and his native genius and temper, with united force engaging him to healing measures, and inspiring him with an abhorrence for such as were factious and divisive; so that, during a season of so great difficulties and hazards, he avoided every extreme, and became a bright example of a zealous moderation, whereby he was of more than ordinary usefulness to the church on all public occasions.

In the year 1645, when a young man, he was appointed by the assembly to attend the army; a happy conjunction of all the endowments which could qualify a person for that station, soon determining the church to make him their choice. Being newly married, he was then in such circumstances, as under the Mosaical economy, would have afforded him a dispensation from that service; and his affectionate wife was not a little frightened at the dangers he might be exposed to; which increased her aversion to such a degree, that her reluctant affection struggled with her duty; but the voice of providence soon gave the last principle the superiority. When he was preparing for his departure, a violent fit of the gravel reduced him to the greatest extremity of pain and danger; his religious spouse understood and improved the divine chastisement; she saw how easily God could put an end to a life she was too apprehensive about; and this wrought her up to a fixed resolution never to oppose her inclinations to his entering upon any employment whereby he might honour his Master, how formidable soever the hazards were which attended it. While he was with the army he was in a remarkable manner preserved, when in very dangerous circumstances, upon a defeat of a party which he was then with. He ever after retained a grateful sense of the divine goodness; and after his return to the parish, was animated thereby to a more vigorous diligence in the work of the ministry, and propagating the kingdom of the Son of God, both among his own people, and all who were round

about him; his public preaching, especially at the administration of the Lord's supper, and his private conversation, conspiring for those noble purposes.

And, indeed, in other respects also, his shining piety, wisdom, and good breeding, made him universally useful in the country where he lived. The just value which the nobility and gentry in the neighbourhood had for him, and the interest which this gave him with them, enabled him to improve successfully frequent opportunities he had to do good offices to particular persons; to compose differences and remove feuds, which were ready enough to prevail in the country, and to assist the judicatures of the church, by procuring the consent and support of those concerned in planting vacant congregations with men worthy of the sacred character.

The prevailing of the English sectarians under Oliver Cromwell, and the variety of attempts which they made while in Scotland, upon the constitution and discipline of the church, was one of the difficulties which the ministry had then to struggle with; and it, among others, gave a discovery of the excellent qualities of Mr. Guthrie. His pleasant facetious conversation, and masterly reasoning, procured him an universal respect from the English officers, and made them fond of his company, while at the same time, his courage and constancy, did not fail him in the cause of his great Master, and were often useful to curb the extravagancies of the sectarians, and maintain order and regularity. One instance hereof happened at the sacrament of the

Lord's supper, celebrated at Glasgow, by pure and Andrew Gray. Several of the English officers had formed a design to put in execution the disorderly principle of a promiscuous admission to the Lord's table, by coming to it themselves, without acquainting the minister, or being in a due manner found worthy of that privilege. Mr. Guthrie, to whose share it fell to dispense the sacrament at that table, spoke to them, when they were leaving their pews in order to make their attempt, with such gravity, resolution and zeal, that they were quite confounded, and sat down again without occasioning any further disturbance.

The Quakers also endeavoured about this time to sow tares in Mr. Guthrie's parish, improving for this end his absence for some weeks, during which he was detained in Angus about his private affairs; but he returned before the poison had sunk deep, recovered some that were in hazard of being tainted by its fatal influences; and in conference so confounded those heretics, that they despaired of ever attacking with success a flock guarded by so watchful and skilful a shepherd, whereas they had made too many proselytes to their wild allusions in Kilbride, and some other neighbouring parishes.

It may be easily imagined, that the eminent gifts and graces of this excellent person would engage parishes of greater character and importance than Finwick to desire his ministry, and earnestly labour for success in their attempts to obtain it; and indeed his people and himself were frequently exposed to the trouble of pro-

about h… rtion, and vexed with fears as the … em, Renfrew, Linlithgow, Ster- … and Edinburgh, having all of … m. But beside the indifferent … rtained of the method of supply- … by transportations in general, and that u… d diversions of a country life were of use to him in maintaining a healthy constitution; his love to his flock was so warm and constant, that he put an invincible obstinacy against all designs of separating him from them. A relation is indeed founded on the noblest bottom, and sinks deepest into the soul, when it is animated by the principle of the spiritual life; and therefore it must in the highest degree endear a minister to his people, and engage their affection and esteem by the most powerful tie, when his labours have been successful in reclaiming them from sin, their ruin, and persuading them to enter upon a religious life; and so they owe to him, as far as they can do to an instrument in the hand of God, the salvation of their immortal souls, which is the incomparably strongest obligation that one man can have to another, and the most flowing source of gratitude; and on the other hand, a minister can scarce miss to have a peculiar tenderness and warmth of divine affection for those whose father he is after the spirit, and hath been honoured by God in bringing them to the kingdom of his Son, and begetting them through the gospel, whose heavenly birth is now the highest pleasure and brightest triumph of his life, and will be one day his crown of glory and rejoicing. A friendship that had such a

rise, and was invigorated by a spirit so pure and active, made Mr. Guthrie prefer Finwick, a poor obscure parish, to the most considerable charges in the nation; which was a proof of his mortification to the world, and that he was moved by views superior to temporal interests.

Thus Mr. Guthrie continued with his old parish till the great alteration which the restoration of king Charles II. made in public affairs. The first discovery that the measures of the court gave of a design to overturn the government of the church, affected the worthy Mr. Guthrie in the most sensible part; nor could any thing afford him satisfaction while she was in trouble, and about to be laid desolate; nor did he let any occasion slip of showing his concern for that which was dearer to him than his other interests. At the synod of Glasgow, held April 1661, after long reasoning about proper measures for the security of religion, the matter was referred to a committee: Mr. Guthrie presented the draught of an address to the parliament, wherein a faithful testimony was given to the purity of our reformation in worship, doctrine, discipline, and government, in terms equally remarkable for their prudence and their courage. Every body approved of it, and it was transmitted to the synod: but some worthy ministers of the side of the public Resolutioners, being doubtful of the seasonableness of such a representation, and considering the difficulties of the times, gave an opportunity to those who designed to comply with prelacy, to procure a delay, and so to crush it; which did not prevent its being serviceable to

the end of our now mentioning it, namely, affording a proof of the zealous honesty and firmness of Mr. Guthrie.

Another instance whereof was, the resolution he took to wait upon his worthy friend, Mr. James Guthrie, at his execution, notwithstanding the apparent hazards he must thereby have exposed himself to. But his session prevailed upon him, though not without difficulty, by their earnest entreaties, to lay aside a design that could not miss to deprive them immediately of his ministry, which, by the goodness of God, they enjoyed some years after his brethren were ejected.

Next to the protection of a kind providence, and the fervent prayers of his own people, and of many others, unto which he always attributed this distinguished favour in the first place, Mr. Guthrie's being connived at for some time, was principally owing to the favour of some great men in the government, particularly the Earls of Eglintoun and Glencairn, the last of whom had a regard for him which was heightened by a conjunction of esteem and gratitude, Mr. Guthrie having had occasion to oblige him when imprisoned for his loyalty before the restoration, which that noble lord never forgot, and when he was chancellor, contributed what he could to his preservation, by which means he enjoyed the peaceable possession of his church, till the year 1664.

As God had designed and prepared him for eminent and extensive services during this period, his excellent accomplishments now exerted themselves with the greatest efficacy, and his usefulness was more universally diffused through the

whole country, which was in a great measure deprived of their pastors. Many then hungered after the word of the Lord, and this made them with more eagerness embrace the advantage which a merciful providence afforded them, of Mr. Guthrie's ministry. Great multitudes resorted to him from all the parts of the west country; his large church was crowded with hearers from Glasgow, Paisly, Lanerk, Hamilton, and other distant places, and his strong and clear voice enabled him to extend the profit of his discourses to the many hundreds who were obliged to keep without doors.

An extraordinary zeal then enlivened the souls of sincere christians; they were animated by a warm affection to the truth, and an uncommon delight in hearing the joyful sound; and this made them despise the difficulties that lay in their way, and bear cheerfully with many inconveniences, which attendance upon the sacred ordinances was then accompanied with: so that we are assured by several worthy persons who enjoyed Mr. Guthrie's ministry at that time, that it was their usual practice to come to Finwick upon Saturday, spend the greatest part of that night in prayer to God, and conversation about the great concerns of their souls, attend on the public worship on the Sabbath, dedicate the remainder of that holy day to religious exercise, and then on the Monday, go home ten, twelve, or twenty miles, without grudging the fatigue of so long a way, and the want of sleep, and other refreshments or finding, themselves less prepared for any business throughout the week, so much

was their heart engaged in the attendance they gave to these sacred administrations. A remarkable blessing accompanied ordinances that were dispensed to people who came with such a disposition of soul; great numbers were converted unto the truth, and many were built up in their most holy faith. A divine power animated the gospel that was preached, and exerted itself in a holy warmth of sanctified affections, a ravishing pleasure in divine fellowship, and a noble joy and triumph in their king and Saviour, which were to be visibly discerned in the hearers; many were confirmed in the good ways of the Lord, strengthened and comforted against temporal fears and discouragements; and the fruits of righteousness, discovering their beauty and excellency in a holy conversation, were a glorious proof of the sincerity of their profession, and the wonderful success of Mr. Guthrie's ministry; some of whom did attest afterwards much more than hath been just now said, and never could think, without an exultation of soul, and emotion of revived affections, upon the memory of their spiritual father, and the power of that victorious grace which, in those days, triumphed so gloriously.

During these few years, while Mr. Guthrie was connived at, the dangers of the time never frightened him from his duty; but, with a becoming boldness, fortified his people in a zealous adherence to the purity of our reformation, warned them of the defection that was then made by the introduction of prelacy, and instructed them in the duties of so difficult a season; while he recommended by his own steadiness what he

taught in the pulpit, he constantly maintained fellowship with his ejected brethren, and never making the least compliance with the prelatical schemes. And yet in his sermons he governed his courage and faithfulness by christian prudence; and with reference to civil affairs, confined himself so much to the language of the sacred oracles, and expressed himself with such a just regard to lawful authority, that his enemies could find no occasion against him.

The extraordinary reputation and usefulness of Mr. Guthrie, who was admired and followed by all the country, provoked the jealous and angry passions of the prelates; and his excellent merit became one of the causes of his being attacked. Intercessions were indeed made in his behalf, but without success, particularly by the earl of Glencairn, then chancellor, who made a visit to the archbishop of Glasgow, at his house there, and, at parting, asked it as a particular favour from him that Mr. Guthrie might be overlooked, he knowing him to be an excellent man, and well affected to the civil government: but the bishop not only refused him, but did it with a haughty and disdainful air, telling him, "that cannot be done, it shall not; he is a ringleader and keeper up of schism in my diocese:" and then pretty abruptly left the chancellor. Rowallan, Cunninghamhead, and some other Presbyterian gentlemen who were waiting on him, observing the chancellor discomposed when he left the archbishop, presumed to ask what the matter might be? To which the earl answered, "we have set up these men, and they will tread

us under their feet." In consequence of this resolution of the inexorable archbishop Burnet, upon the 24th of July, 1664, Mr. Guthrie was, by a commission from him, suspended, discharged the exercise of his ministry, and his church declared vacant, and he himself by an armed force, obliged to remove from it: a large account of which will be given by the Rev. Mr. Wodrow, in that useful and much desired work, *the History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, which will be shortly published.* He was, notwithstanding allowed to live in his manse at Finwick, where he continued some more than a year; during which he was exceeding useful to his people in a private character.

His brother, to whom he had made over his paternal estate of Pitforthy, dying in the summer, 1665, Mr. Guthrie's presence there was necessary for ordering private affairs, which made him and his wife take a journey for Angus about that time. He had not been long in that country till he was seized by a complication of distempers; the gravel, with which he had been frequently tortured, the gout, and a violent heartburning, at once attacking him with great fury; the agonies which those three terrible engines of pain occasioned, were almost insupportable; and were therefore a scene prepared for a brighter appearance of the constancy, patience and resignation of this worthy minister. In the midst of his heavy afflictions he still adored the meas-

* These memoirs of the life of Mr. William Guthrie, were wrote in the year 1720, before Mr. Wodrow's history was published.

ures of divine providence, though at the same time he longed for his dissolution, and expressed the satisfaction and joy with which he would make the grave his dwelling place, when God should think fit to give him rest there. His compassionate Master at last indulged the pious breathings of his soul: after eight or ten days illness he was gathered to his fathers, and died in the house of his brother in law, Mr. Lewis Skinner, minister at Brechin, upon Wednesday the 10th of October, 1665, afternoon, in the forty-fifth year of his age, and was buried in the church of Brechin, under Pitforthy's desk. And as he himself died in the full assurance of faith, as to his own interest in the covenant of God, and under the pleasing hopes that God would return in glory to the church of Scotland; so we have no doubt that his better part, his soul, was carried by angels to those peaceful regions, none of the inhabitants whereof ever say they are sick; and is now shining amidst the dazzling glories of those superior orbs, which are destined for the heroes of christianity, who have turned many unto righteousness, and have borne a distinguished part in the battles and triumphs of the king of saints.

During his sickness he was visited by the bishop of Brechin, and several Episcopal ministers, his relations and acquaintances; who all had an high value for him, notwithstanding he, with an ingenuous freedom, expressed to them his sorrow for their compliance with the corrupt establishment in ecclesiastical affairs, which was then made.

This short and imperfect account of his life may, in some measure, let the reader into the character of this excellent person: but we hope it will not be unacceptable, if without repeating what hath been already represented, we in a very plain and simple manner, give some farther account of his character, as we have it from persons of undoubted reputation, who were themselves well acquainted with him.

His person was stately and well shaped, and his features comely and handsome. And while he was raised above an effeminate delicacy, which was unworthy the dignity of the ministerial character, he abhorred a slovenly meanness, as very far below it, and was therefore neat and cleanly in his apparel: and in his whole behaviour, as well as in his dress, there was nothing that could give the least disgust to gentlemen of the politest education and nicest taste. An awful gravity dwelt upon his countenance, and never gave way to levity in conversation, or those freedoms which were unbecoming his sacred office, however allowable they might be to persons of a different order: but he knew how to sweeten and manage his temper so as never to degenerate into an affected solemnity, or inconversable austerity, but was usually extremely cheerful and facetious in his conversation, which made it universally agreeable, and added to the esteem of a minister the endearments of a friend and comrade; though indeed, which is generally the case of great spirits, there was in his temper an intermixture of thoughtfulness and melancholy, which sometimes gained the superiority,

when the public interests were endangered, and the enemies of Zion, which was his favourite concern, prevailed.

He used the innocent recreations and exercises which then prevailed, fishing, fowling, and playing upon the ice, which, at the same time contributed to preserve a vigorous health, and while in frequent conversation with the best of the neighbouring gentry, as these occasions gave him access, to bear in upon them reproofs and instructions with an inoffensive familiarity.

His strong, clear, and melodious voice, joined to a good ear, gave him a great pleasure in music, in the theory and practice of which he had a more than ordinary dexterity: and he failed not, with mighty joy and satisfaction, to employ frequently his voice for the noblest use of it, the praises of his Maker and Saviour; in which part of divine worship his soul and body acted with an united and unwearied vigour.

All the other amiable qualities that can give a lustre to a man or a christian recommended this excellent person; his generosity, hospitality, and charitable disposition, were on all proper occasions, conspicuous, and his modest humility gave a loveliness to his other virtues. Few men had greater temptations offered to pride and vanity, his natural and acquired abilities, great success, established reputation, and the applauses of the whole country who admired him, were all dangerous flatterers, apt to beguile a man into a fond conceit of himself; but his lowliness of mind was proof against these pleasing seducers, nor could they charm him into selfsufficiency and

esteem; for he had not so learned Christ, and knew that he possessed nothing but what he had freely received.

He excelled in another noble part of religion, as well as humanity, an affectionate sympathy with such as were exposed either to outward afflictions, or the heavier troubles of a disquieted soul: for such he had always a melting tenderness, and embraced every occasion of succouring and relieving them; his own experience filled him with pity for those who were in like circumstances, and gave him, in some measure, what his great Master hath always, in an incomparably more exalted degree for poor sinners, a fellow-feeling of their infirmities, and enabled as well as stirred him up to comfort them with the consolations whereby God hath refreshed and solaced his own soul; and he was ever sending up fervent prayers to the throne of grace in their behalf.

We have, in the former part of this account of Mr. Guthrie, mentioned several of those eminent ministerial qualifications which he possessed, and made his character as a minister equal to that which he has so justly enjoyed as a man and a christian.

In his youth he had been a hard student, and this gave him a value for all the branches of learning, and an acquaintance with them; but above all, his favourite employment was the study of the holy scriptures, which he read often in the original languages; and out of this divine treasure of spiritual knowledge he brought out, as our Saviour speaks, things new and old, which were

of the highest advantage to him when he came to the pulpit. As a thorough acquaintance with the bible is the best way to make a good preacher, so this was one mean of that excellency in discourses from the pulpit for which Mr. Guthrie was so much celebrated: and indeed his sermons had all the advantages which could be given them, by a clear explication of the text, observations and enlargements, that were important and suitable to the subject, allusions and illustrations adapted to the meanest capacities of his people, and at the same time to the dignity of the pulpit, and the honour of religion, which required a very uncommon talent: and then a lively and affecting application of the doctrines which he taught to the consciences of his hearers, with an admirable mixture of light and heat, calculated to instruct the ignorant, awaken the secure, and enliven the whole soul in the ways of God; and, to conclude, his sermons, so excellent in their composure, were delivered with a clear, strong and well toned voice, a graceful and vehement action, and eyes flowing with tears, which were circumstances of no little advantage.

In prayer to God, Mr. Guthrie equalled, if not exceeded, himself as a preacher: the highest seriousness and fervency, an awe of the great God on his soul, and a lively faith in his fatherly goodness and care, together with an inward feeling of what he spoke, all remarkably accompanying his addresses to the throne of grace in such a degree, that many who heard him were usually melted into tears of affection, and exceedingly edified.

And to conclude, all his eminent qualities were sanctified by the grace of God, and heightened by an unaffected piety, and delightful fellowship with God, through Christ; under the shinings of whose countenance he habitually lived, and attained to a very uncommon degree of spiritual mindedness, of a heavenly frame and temper, and of joy and peace in believing, while he both lived and died in full assurance of faith.

We shall put an end to this imperfect account of the life and character of so eminent a person, by the testimonies of Mr. John Livingstone, minister at Ancrum, and Mr. Matthew Crawford, minister at Eastwood, both his contemporaries, concerning him. The first in a manuscript account which he wrote of the ministers of his own time, hath what follows. "Mr. William Guthrie, minister at Finwick, was a man of a most ready gift, and plentiful invention, with most opposite comparisons, fit both to awaken and pacify consciences; straight and steadfast in the public cause of Christ; he was a great light in the west of Scotland. He was much and often troubled with the gravel, whereof he died." In another place he says, "In his doctrine Mr. William Guthrie was as full and free as any man in Scotland had ever been, which, together with the excellency of his preaching gift, did so recommend him to the affections of people, that they turned the cornfield of his glebe to a little town; every one building a house for his family upon it, that they might live under the drop of his ministry."

The other, Mr. Matthew Crawford, in his manuscript history of the church of Scotland, hath these words: "Mr. William Guthrie was a burning and shining light, kept in after many others, by the favour of the old earl of Eglintoun, the chancellor's father in law. He converted and confirmed many thousand souls, and was esteemed the greatest practical preacher in Scotland."

Mr. Rutherford, in his letters, hath some passages concerning Mr. Guthrie; but these being already published, it would be needless to transcribe any thing from them; nor shall we detain the reader, by the character which Mr. Traill gives of Mr. Guthrie from his own knowledge of him, since it may be found with more advantage in the preface which that worthy minister prefixed to the edition of this treatise, published at London, 1705, and since reprinted at Edinburgh.

Though few people have been in all respects better qualified to write upon practical subjects, yet the modest and diffident sentiments which Mr. Guthrie always entertained of himself, deprived the world of the great advantage they would have reaped from his sermons and other composures of this nature, had he thought fit to make them public. But, to the no small loss of the church, this excellent treatise is the only genuine performance of Mr. Guthrie which hath seen the light, the publication whereof was owing to another cause rather than to the inclination of the author, which was plainly enough forced upon this occasion. Some unknown per-

son came by a copy of a few imperfect notes of some sermons that Mr. Guthrie had preached upon the fifty-fifth of Isaiah, with a relation to personal covenanting; and without the smallest intimation of his design made to him, printed them in a small pamphlet of sixty-one pages, 12mo. under this title, "A clear, attractive, warming beam of light, from Christ the Son of life, leading to himself; wherein is held forth a clear, sound and easy way of a soul's particular closing with God in the covenant of free grace, to the full ending and clearing all debates thereanent." Printed at Aberdeen, by J. B. 1657. The book indeed was anonymous, but Mr. Guthrie was reputed the author of it by the whole country, and so obliged to take notice of it; he was equally displeased at the vanity of the title, and the gross defects of the work itself, which consisted of some broken notes of his sermons, confusedly handled together by an injudicious hand; and when he saw that it was the only remedy, he felt himself under a necessity, however uneasy to him, to review his sermons, from which he soon composed this admirable treatise.

There were indeed after the restoration, some sermons of Mr. Guthrie's, upon Hosea xiii. 9. and a few other texts, printed from very imperfect notes taken by a hearer, by some obscure person who wanted to make a little gain; but as those could in no just sense be accounted the work of Mr. Guthrie, being both extremely corrupt and defective, and were very injurious to his memory. Mrs. Guthrie, his widow, printed an advertisement, and spread it as far as she could, to

guard the public from being imposed upon by those spurious sermons, which in a great measure put a stop to so unfair a practice: and should in reason have prevented the disengenuous extracts of some coarse, unguarded expressions from them, which are to be met with in some prelatical pamphlets, whereby they endeavour calumniously to expose the Presbyterian interest from the falsely alledged failures of one of its eminent guides and supporters.

This small treatise, THE CHRISTIANS GREAT INTEREST, the only genuine work of Mr. Guthrie, hath been blessed by God with wonderful success in our own country. It was published very seasonably, a little before the introduction of prelacy, at the restoration: nor is the conduct of a merciful providence to be overlooked, in affording so useful a help to multitudes of the people of God, when their worthy pastors were torn from them. Several have owed their conversion unto a religious life to the reading of the treatise; and many thousands have been thereby mightily edified and built up in the most holy faith.

Nor hath it less regard paid it abroad in England: its author and itself were highly esteemed by the greatest and best men there; and that there could not be a greater honour done it than by the character given thereof by Dr. Owen, will appear to all who are acquainted with the incomparable learning and worth of that excellent scholar and divine. This story was related by a reverend minister of the church of Scotland, who had the doctor's sentiments from his own

mouth. One day in conversation with him, the doctor, speaking of Scotland, said to our informer, "you have truly men of great spirits in Scotland: there is for a gentleman Mr. Baillie of Jerviswood, a person of the greatest abilities I ever almost met with; and for divines," said he, pulling out of his pocket a little gilded copy of this treatise of Mr. Guthrie's "that author I take to have been one of the greatest divines that ever wrote: it is my vade mecum, and I carry it and the Sedan New Testament still about with me: I have written several folios, but there is more divinity in it than in them all." Though the great modesty of this admirable divine made him give a very unequal character of his own excellent performances, yet this does not hinder such an account of Mr. Guthrie's book, given by so masterly a judge, from being as much for its reputation as any thing of that nature can be.

Nor was the usefulness of this pious treatise confined either to the author's own country or language: foreigners also valued it, translated it, and were eminently profited thereby. It was translated into Low Dutch by the reverend and pious Mr. Koelman, and was highly esteemed in Holland, so that Mrs. Guthrie and one of her daughters met with uncommon civilities and kindness when their relation to its author was known. It is also translated into French and High Dutch; and we are informed, that it was also translated into one of the eastern tongues, at the charges of that noble patron of religion, learning and charity, the Hon. Robert Boyle.

After what hath been said of the intrinsic excellency of this useful book, it might perhaps appear both needless and assuming for us to pretend to give any further character of it, or recommend it to the esteem and use of the public.

Thus far the very learned and excellent author of this preface had proceeded in it, when it pleased his Lord and Master to call him to the everlasting reward of his labours, to his own unspeakable advantage, but to the great loss of the church, and inexpressible grief of all his surviving friends.

But he having proposed, at his entering upon this preface, not only to give some account of the author, which is all death has permitted him to do, but also to make some observations upon the work itself; some thought the preface would be imperfect if this likewise were not done. It is, therefore, here essayed, though with very unequal abilities.

This excellent treatise (which has been already so often published, translated into foreign languages, and passed the course of more than sixty years with universal applause) hath already its praises in the churches of Christ; and its just and universal esteem so well settled as to need no letters of commendation from any man, especially from so obscure a hand as mine; yet, to give some account of the reasons for which it hath been so highly valued to those who have never read it, to clear and confirm the grounds upon which is founded the just esteem of others who have already perused it, to prevent the

prejudices that may be entertained by some, and a little to lay open the spirit of the author and his doctrine, that this treatise may be read with the more extensive advantage by all, will, we hope, not be unacceptable to any, but grateful and edifying to those who are desirous that the church and their own souls should reap all possible advantage by such books as are published.

The observations that may be made upon this treatise are, either such as concern the style of it, or the doctrine contained in it, or else the authors way and manner of managing his subject, and the several branches of it.

As to the style, that would need but little apology, though the book were appearing now for the first time in the world; for bating some few expressions, and these too occuring but seldom, that are now become somewhat obsolete, the words and phrases used are just and grave, clear and significant, level to the capacity of the meanest, and yet not below that of the greatest. But considering that this treatise was written so many years ago, since which time our language has suffered great changes, the style of it deserves not only our acceptance, but even our high esteem. It is plain, and yet decent, and adorned with all needful beauty; clear, and yet concise and comprehensive; few books written in this country about that time are so pure in their style; and this will be the more valued, if we remember what the author says in his preface, "that in this book he has mainly, if not only, consulted the advantage of the rude and igno-

rant; for while he teaches these in a plain style, he entertains even the learned, that are serious, agreeably. So that whoever neuseates this book for its style, shews himself more of a critical than of a christian spirit.

The beauty of the style is exceeded, and even eclipsed, by the excellency of the matter which it contains: upon which many observations might be made, very useful and necessary to be remembered in these giddy times. The subject which he handles is, of all others, of the greatest importance and moment to every man: it is the Christian's Great Interest, his greatest interest indeed, his union with Christ the blessed Redeemer, and his title to the invaluable and glorious blessings of his purchase. The two parts of this great subject which he treats of, are these which most nearly touch every christian, and which he is most called to bring to a clear and satisfying issue; how a person may try his interest in Christ, and how he may attain to it, and secure it. Happy that man who can satisfy himself as to these.

In managing these heads of his discourse, it is evident to every one who reads this treatise, that the author founds his doctrine upon the principles of that system which asserts free grace as the cause of our salvation, and of all that leads to it; these principles which were first delivered to the saints in the holy scriptures, restored again with the scriptures at the glorious reformation from Popery, received into almost all the confessions of faith of the reformed churches, and fully asserted by the Synod of Dort, in op-

position to Pelagian, and Semi-Pelagian errors. Upon this system is founded the doctrine of this treatise, in which the author asserts or supposes particular election, effectual grace, man's natural inability to do what is spiritually good, Christ's satisfying for the elect only, and the perseverance of the saints: these principles plainly run through the whole work, and it is bottomed upon them.

Yet at the same time, nothing is omitted that naturally could fall within such a work, to inculcate the necessity of holiness, and universal obedience to God's holy law. The freedom and fulness of the grace of Christ in the gospel is so taught, as not to justle out the necessity of our own utmost diligence and care to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; it was not the author's business, in so small and so practicable a treatise, to show explicitly the consistency of these two together; he knew this was sufficiently done in books of a controversial nature; but holding to the doctrine of our excellent Westminster confession, he so exalts free grace as not to invalidate the obligation of the moral law; he so asserts our natural corruption as not to loosen our obligations to gospel obedience; and equally discourages free will and merit on the one hand, and slothfulness and security on the other; and this not by direct assertions upon these heads, which are consequently overturned by contrary doctrines laid down in other places, as is done in some late books of modern divinity, but by asserting the principles upon which they depend.

Thus he does not with some, exclude the word condition from the new covenant, as if there were a hazard of making God's own terms of his covenant too necessary, and some danger of binding them too fast upon the souls of his people; but with our larger catechism, he frequently makes use of that word throughout the whole book, without apprehending any danger from it; and asserts oftener than once, in the plainest and strongest terms, that faith is the condition of the new covenant.

This faith he does not place as some have done, in a firm persuasion that Christ died for us; nay, he refutes this as a most dangerous and absurd notion; but "in the stating of the heart upon God in Christ, as a full blessing and satisfying portion, in the soul's acquiescence in the way of salvation by Christ; it is to accept of, and close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, held forth in the gospel; and to close with Christ in his kingly office, as he is anointed to be a king, to rule over a man in all things." A notion of faith, which, as it exalts free grace, so it excludes the presumption of hypocrites; and is fitted to prevent discouragements and despondency in the truly godly, and to excite holiness, by causing the soul to go forth towards God in Christ, and to follow hard after him as its chief good and happiness; whereas the other groundless notion of it leads to the very reverse of all these.

This pious and judicious author makes assurance of our interest in Christ to be attainable, and that too more easy than many serious chris-

tions do imagine; yet he will by no means allow it to be of the essence of justifying faith, or inseparable from it; on the contrary, he teaches in the most express terms, that many are truly gracious, and have a good title to eternal life, who do not know so much.

He asserts the freedom and universal extent of the gospel offer in the fullest terms, declaring, that "peace and salvation is offered to all without exception; that a man is not to question God's willingness to receive men who go to Christ honestly;" but does not think it necessary, for laying a foundation for this offer, to affirm, that "Christ died for all men," as some others have imagined; nor torture himself to find out the ground of this general offer till he has almost wrought himself into the Arminian scheme. With him "it was for the sins of the elect that Christ satisfied," and this restriction of Christ's satisfaction he did not judge inconsistent with an universal offer; but, with other orthodox divines he judged that the universal offer was the means for applying Christ's satisfaction to the persons for whom it was specially made; and that this glorious end of converting an elect world, together with God's extensive command to his servants, Matt. xxviii. 19. was sufficient ground to preach the gospel to every man without perplexing matters with new schemes, which, as it often happens, involves matters, instead of explaining them.

Another thing observable in this excellent and pious author, is his particular regard, throughout this whole treatise, unto God's holy law.

As the promoting of holiness, and a thorough conversion in christians, appears to be the great design of his work; so he does, throughout the whole of it, maintain an inviolable respect for God's law, which is the rule and measure of it. He does not lay out himself (as some innovating writers on the same subject have done) to find out subtle distinctions of the meaning of the word *law*, till he has almost distinguished away the obligation of it. He makes the law a schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ; but then he does not lay it aside, as an almanack out of date, when it has brought us to him; nay, he makes it one of the first breathings of the new nature, "to acknowledge the law to be good, holy, just and spiritual; to accept of Christ's whole yoke without exception; and to become a servant of righteousness unto God." He makes "the genuine fruit of the new life to be faith working by love," which is the fulfilling of the law; and tells us, that "the promises are made to faith followed with holiness," which is the same with obedience to it.

Agreeably to this binding force of God's law, he every where excites and encourages christians to exert their most earnest and vehement endeavours in the work of their salvation: he not only encourages believers, whose powers are by their conversion made active, to diligence and industry; but he calls even unconverted sinners, who are dead in trespasses and sins, to essay their duty, and diligently to apply themselves to the practice of it, and gives them great encour-

agement to do so. He tells us, that "though no words will take effect till God pour out his spirit, yet ministers must still press men's duty upon them, and charge them that they give the Lord no rest till he send out that spirit, which he will give to them that ask it."

He teaches, "that though none do cordially close with God in Christ Jesus, and acquiesce in that ransom found out by God, except only such as are elected, and whose hearts the Lord doth sovereignly determine to that blessed choice; yet the Lord hath left it as a duty upon people who hear this gospel, "to close with his offer of salvation, as if it were in their power to do it:" and that the Lord, through these commands and exhortations, doth convey life and strength, and the new hearts to the elect; and that it is his mind, in these commands and invitations, to put people to some duty, with which he uses to concur for accomplishing that business between him and them."

Yea, further, answering the objection taken from our natural impotency to close with Christ, he positively affirms, "that if we essay to close with Christ, and rest on him for the offered salvation, God will not be wanting on his part; and that it shall not fail on his part, if we have a mind to the business." Thus he always takes care to keep up an harmony betwixt the freedom and power of grace on the one hand, and the necessity and usefulness of our own endeavours on the other; and while he owns our utter inability to do any thing that is spiritually good, he

gives all encouragement that can be desired to our own most earnest endeavours.

To this same purpose it may be observed, that he formerly exhorts to personal covenanting with God, and largely directs the management of it as a matter of great importance. He did not fear, as some it seems now do, that the soul shall be guilty of presumption in dedicating itself with all solemnity to God in Christ, and in embracing the offered privilege of sealing a sure covenant with him: he doubted not but that particular persons might do that acceptably, which bodies of men had so often done with great success, and glorious tokens of God's presence with them, in holy scripture.

Thus it were easy to enlarge in making many observations upon the excellency and soundness of this author's doctrine; but it is now time to conclude, with taking notice briefly of this excellent author's way and manner of managing his subject, and delivering his doctrine. It is obvious to every one who reads him with attention, that he speaks with a full understanding of his subject; he appears to have mediated deeply upon it, and to have digested fully the several particulars of it: all he says is of a piece and consistent; he seems to have had the last words, and all the intermediate parts of it, in view when he wrote the first. He does not write, as some others upon the same subject have done, loosely and incoherently; nor has he made up his book, as they have done theirs, of gathered scraps, put together with little connection, and as little consistency; nay, he speaks every where like one

that is master of his subject; yet he writes always with the utmost modesty and caution: he does not impose his own experiences in religion as absolutely necessary to others, but allows a latitude for God's various ways of dealing with different persons. How carefully does he guard his reader against mistakes upon the several heads which he handles? He does not, as some have done, lay down crued and unguarded assertions in one place, and trust to the attention and judgment of his reader for correcting them by others laid down elsewhere: nay, he was sensible, that not to mislead is much better than to bring back those who have wandered; not to poison than to administer an antidote; and therefore under every head, he pointedly guards and circumscribes his subject.

He writes from his own experience: one may easily perceive the heart speaking out its own experience almost in every line, and the author feeling, as well as understanding his matter. At the same time he discovers the greatest judgment and solidity in distinguishing things doubtful from things certain; and things essential to the christian life from things extrinsic and circumstantial to it: founding nothing upon christian experience but what has the countenance of holy scripture.

Thus we have in this little book, a treatise upon that subject, which, of all others, is of the greatest importance to a christian, written in such a manner as equally exalts free grace, and encourages gospel holiness; and guarded with the greatest exactness against the opposite extremes.

of presumption and despondency: a treatise written with the utmost plainness, and yet with great solidity and judgment, with all the depth of a knowing and judicious divine, and the feeling of an experienced christian. How happy had it been for the church, if none had undertaken to write practical treatises without these and the like qualities of this excellent author? how much for the growth of true religion in men's hearts and lives, if such a plain and useful treatise as this, were as warmly recommended and as carefully studied, as others of a different character? this treatise of practical christianity, as ancient as the scriptures, should be found more useful than many Marrows of Modern Divinity. It is in this edition attended with all the advantages that the publisher could think of to make it both useful and agreeable to the reader. The Lord himself grant it may further answer its noble end of converting and confirming souls, and in all respects yield much fruit to his honour.

The following account of the Reverend Mr. William Guthrie, is faithfully transcribed from that laborious and worthy divine, Mr. Robert Wodrow, in his history of the sufferings of the church of Scotland, and is as follows:

MR. WILLIAM GUTHRIE, minister at Finwick, in the shire of Air, used the greatest of freedom and sincerity in his sermons at this time. I am too nearly concerned in this great man to say much about him, and therefore choose to give this in the words of a worthy minister, his contemporary, in his character of him. "In his doctrine Mr. William Guthrie was as full and free as any man in Scotland had ever been; which, together with the excellency of his preaching gift, did so recommend him to the affections of people, that they turned the cornfield of his glebe to a little town, and every one building a house for his family upon it, that they might live under the drop of his ordinances and ministry." Indeed the Lord gave him an opportunity to bear a longer testimony against the defections of this time than most of his brethren; till at length the malice of the archbishop of Glasgow, turned him out in the year 1664, as we may hear.

Congregational Fasts kept.

A great many ministers kept congregational fasts; and that was almost all they could do, since now there was scarce any opportunity of presbyterial or synodical appointments of this nature; and in some places where there was disaffected persons to delate them, ministers suffered not a little for this practice, and the plainness of their doctrine.

The other instance I promised as to the sufferings of old ministers this year, is that of the reverend and singularly useful Mr. William Guthrie, minister of the gospel at Finwick. This extraordinary person I have particular opportunities to have certain and distinct accounts of. I heartily wish some proper hand would give the public a just narrative of this great man's life which might, I persuade myself, be very useful. The broken hints we have, before the last edition of his excellent Saving Interest, at London 1705, are lame and indistinct, and were wrote without the knowledge of his remaining relations, who could have given more just and larger accounts: I shall therefore here give the more particular history of his sufferings at the time, and his being forced to part with his dear flock.

He continues longer at his work than many others.

By the interest of several noblemen and others, to whom Mr. Guthrie was very dear, he enjoyed a connivance, and was overlooked for a considerable time, when he continued at his Master's work, though in his sermons he was more than ordinarily free and plain.

When bishop Burnet comes to Glasgow, he and some other ministers are attacked.

But soon after Dr. Alexander Burnet was brought from the See of Aberdeen to that of Glasgow, he and the few remaining ministers about him were attacked; such as, Mr. Livingston, at Biggar, Mr. M'Kall, at Bothwell, Mr. Gabriel Maxwell, at Dundonald, Mr. Gabriel Cunningham, at Dunlop, and Mr. Andrew

Hutcheson, and Mr. William Castlelaw, ministers at Stewartoun; and perhaps the chancellor's death about this time helped to pave the way for the greater severity against these worthy persons.

Nothing prevails with the archbishop to spare Mr. Guthrie.

The archbishop had been addressed by some of the greatest in the kingdom in behalf of Mr. Guthrie, and treated them very indiscreetly: by no importunity would he suffer himself to be prevailed upon to spare him any longer. When means and intercessions could not prevail, Mr. Guthrie was warned of the archbishop's design against him, and advised by persons of note, his friends, to suffer no resistance to be made to his dispossession of the church and manse; since his enemies wanted only this for a handle to prosecute him criminally for his zeal and faithfulness in the former times: such was their spite against this useful man of God.

Wednesday, July 20, kept as a Congregational Fast with his people.

Under the prospect of parting with his beloved people, Wednesday, the 20th of July this year, was set apart by him for fasting and prayer with his congregation. The text he preached from was, Hosea xiii. 9. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself."—His sermon was afterwards printed very unfairly and indistinctly, from an incorrect copy. From that scripture, with great

plainness and affection, he laid before them their sins, and those of the land, and of that age; and indeed the place was a Bochim.

He preaches the next Lord's day, early in the morning, and takes leave of his people.

At the close of that day's work he gave intimation of a sermon upon the next Lord's day very early; and his own people and many others met him at the church of Finwick, betwixt four and five in the morning, where he preached twice to them from the close of his last text, "But in me is thine help." And as he used upon ordinary Sabbaths, he had two sermons, and a short interval betwixt them, and dismissed the people before nine in the morning. Upon this melancholy occasion, he directed them unto the great fountain of help, when the gospel and ministers were taken from them; and took his leave of them, commending them to this great God who was able to build them up, and help them in the time of their need.

No violence used against the party who came to dispossess him.

His people would willingly have sacrificed all that was dear to them, in defence of the gospel, and adhering to him. Indeed Mr. Guthrie had some difficulty to get their affection to him so far moderated as to keep them from violent proceedings against the party who came to dispos-

ses him; they would have effectually prevented the church being declared vacant, and were ready to have resisted even to blood, striving against sin, if they had been permitted. But Mr. Guthrie's peaceable disposition, his great regard to lawful civil authority, with his prudent foresight of the consequences of such a procedure, both as to the interests of the gospel, his people, and himself, made him lay himself out, and use the interest he had in the people, which was very great, to keep the peace; and there was no disturbance which could be made a handle of by adversaries.

With much difficulty the archbishop gets one to intimate his sentence against Mr. Guthrie.

When the archbishop of Glasgow resolved upon dispossessing him, he dealt with several of his curates to intimate his sentence against Mr. Guthrie, and as many refused it. There was an awe upon their spirits, which scared them from meddling with this great man; besides, they very well knew it was an action would render them forever odious to the West country, and they feared the consequence. At last he prevailed with one who was curate of Calder, as I am told, and promised him five pounds sterling for his reward: but, poor man; it was the price of blood, the blood of souls, and neither he nor his had much satisfaction in it.

The curate of Calder intimates it, July 24th, in the church of Finwick.

Upon the 24th of July, this man came with a party of twelve soldiers to Finwick church on the

Lord's day, and, by commission from the archbishop, discharged Mr. Guthrie to preach any more at Finwick, declared the church vacant, and suspended him from the exercise of his ministry.

And to himself in the Manse.

The commander of the party and the curate, leaving the soldiers without, came into the manse, or minister's house. The best account I can at this distance give of what passed in the house, is by inserting a short minute of this, left among the small remains of a valuable collection of papers belonging to Mr. Guthrie, which were taken away, as we shall afterwards hear, some years after this, by violence, and against all the rules of equity, from his widow, and fell into the hands of the bishops. The paper was drawn up at the time to keep up the remembrance of this affair, without any design of its being published, and I give it in its own native and plain dress.

The sum of the curate's discourse when he came and intimated Mr. William Guthrie his sentence of suspension; with Mr. Guthrie's answer to him.

An account of what passed in the Manse.

The curate showed, "that the bishop and committee, after much lenity shown to him for a long time, were constrained to pass the sentence of suspension against him, for not keeping of presbyteries and synods with his brethren, and his unpeaceableness in the church; of which sentence he was appointed to make public intí-

mation to him, for which he read his commission under the archbishop of Glasgow, his hand."

Mr. Guthrie answered, "I judge it not convenient to say much in answer to what you have spoken: only, whereas you allege there hath been much lenity used towards me, be it known unto you, that I take the Lord for party in that, and thank him for it; yea, I look upon it as a door which God opened to me for preaching this gospel, which neither you nor any man else was able to shut, till it was given you of God. And as to that sentence passed against me, I declare before these gentlemen (the officers of the party,) that I lay no weight upon it, as it comes from you, or those who sent you; though I do respect the civil authority, who by their law laid the ground for this sentence: and were it not for the reverence I owe to the civil magistrate, I would not surcease from the exercise of my ministry for all that sentence. And as to the crimes I am charged with, I did keep presbyteries and synods with my brethren; but I do not judge those who now sit in these to be my brethren, but men who have made defection from the truth and cause of God; nor do I judge those to be free or lawful courts of Christ that are now sitting. And as to my unpeaceableness, I know I am bidden follow peace with all men, but I know also I am bidden follow it with holiness; and since I could not obtain peace without prejudice to holiness, I thought myself obliged to let it go. And as for your commission, sir, to intimate this sentence, I here declare, I think

myself called by the Lord to the work of the ministry, and did forsake my nearest relations in the world, and gave up myself to the service of the gospel, in this place, having received an unanimous call from this parish, and being tried and ordained by the presbytery: and I bless the Lord he hath given me some success, and a seal of my ministry upon the souls and consciences of not a few that are gone to heaven, and of some that are yet in the way to it. And now, sir, if you will take it upon you to interrupt my work among this people, as I shall wish the Lord may forgive you the guilt of it, so I cannot but leave all the bad consequences that follow upon it betwixt God and your own conscience. And here I do further declare before these gentlemen, that I am suspended from my ministry for adhering to the *covenants* and work of God, from which you and others have apostatized."

Here the curate interrupting him, said, "that the Lord had a work before that covenant had a being, and that he judged them apostates who adhered to that covenant; and that he wished that not only the Lord would forgive him (Mr. Guthrie,) but if it were lawful to pray for the dead (at which expression the soldiers did laugh,) that the Lord would forgive the sin of this church these hundred years past."

"It is true," answered Mr. Guthrie, "the Lord had a work before that covenant had a being, but it is as true that it hath been more glorious since that covenant; and it is a small thing for us to be judged of you, in adhering to that

covenant; who has so deeply corrupted your ways, and seem to reflect on the whole work of reformation from popery these hundred years past, by intimating that the church had need of pardon for the same.

"As for you, gentlemen," added he, directing himself to the soldiers, "I wish the Lord may pardon you for countenancing of this man in this business." One of them scoffingly replied, "I wish we never do a greater fault." Well said Mr. Guthrie, "a little sin may damn a man's soul."

Mr. Guthrie's civilities to the soldiers.

When this had passed, Mr. Guthrie called for a glass of ale, and craving a blessing himself, drank to the commander of the soldiers: and after they had been civilly entertained by him, they left the house. I have it confidently reported, that Mr. Guthrie, at parting, did signify to the curate, that he apprehended some evident mark of the Lord's displeasure was abiding him for what he was now doing, and seriously warned him to prepare for some stroke coming upon him very soon.

The curate died a little after.

Mr. Guthrie's relations, and a worthy old minister yet alive when I wrote this, who was that day at Finwick with him, from whom I have part of this account, do not mind to have heard any thing of this denunciation; but it might have

been without their hearing, since none of them were present at parting. Whatever be in this, I am well assured the curate never preached more after he left Finwick. He came into Glasgow, and whether he reached Calder, but four miles from it, I know not; but in a few days he died in great torment of an iliac passion, and his wife and children died all in a year, or thereby; and none belonging to him were left: so hazardous a thing it is to meddle with Christ's sent servants.

The Kirk declared vacant.

When they left the manse, the curate went into the church of Finwick with the soldiers, his guard, and now his hearers, and preached to them not a quarter of an hour, and intimated from the pulpit the bishop's sentence against Mr. Guthrie. Nobody came to hear him but the party who came with him, and a few children and boys, who created him some disturbance, but were chased off by the soldiers.

Mr. Guthrie continues in the parish till October 1665, when he died in Angus.

Mr. Guthrie continued in the parish, but preached no more in the church, where, as far as I can learn, there was no curate ever settled. Upon the 10th of October, next year, this excellent person died in Angus whither he went to settle some affairs relating to his estate of Pitforthy there. Thus by the malice of the prelates, this bright and eminent light of the West of Scotland was put under a bushel, yea, extinguished.

Mr. William Guthrie dies, October, 10.

By this time many of the old Presbyterian ministers, who had seen the glory of the former temple, were got to their rest. The 10th day of October this year, brought the Rev. Mr. William Guthrie to his Father's house. I shall only add the remark made upon his lamented death, by the worthy minister his contemporary, whom I cited before, when I spoke of him." "This year the Presbyterians in Scotland, lost one of their pillars, Mr. William Guthrie, minister of the gospel, at Finwick, one of the most eloquent, successful, popular preachers that ever was in Scotland. He died a sufferer; for he was deposed by the bishop, but in hopes, that one day the Lord would deliver Scotland from her thraldom." Many others of the old ministers of this church died about this time in peace, being taken away from the evil to come, which was fast coming on in great measures, and departed under the solid and firm hope of a glorious deliverance coming to this poor church.

A

RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE,

BY THE

LATE REV. MR. ROBERT TRAIL.

THIS little book, having past so many impressions, both in Scotland and England, within the last fifty years, (for it is near that time since it first was printed,) and being commended by the acceptance of the saints, needeth nothing more, especially from so obscure a hand, to recommend it. But having known the author, I would willingly acquaint the world with somewhat of his character, after one hint about his book. It is to this author we owe the first motion of personal covenanting with God. We have heard more, far more, of making national covenants for reformation, and of church covenants for mutual gospel-fellowship, than we have seen of the keeping of them. But Mr. Guthrie first wrote of personal covenanting, as far as ever I can learn; and that, not till he had consulted many, both ministers and christians. He having opened the door, several have followed, but non passibus æquis; and by the length and artificial method in their schemes of such covenants, have put the practisers thereof in no small danger of running the matter into a dry formality,

the bane of all holy things. But it is plain, that this author designed nothing, in his short form of words, but to close the act of saving faith in Christ in such expressions as suit the experience of every believer.

Mr. William Guthrie was the eldest son of a country gentleman in the shire of Angus, in Scotland, of a good family, and of a competent estate.—After he had passed his course of philosophy at the university of St. Andrew's, he went to the new college there, where theology and the Hebrew are taught by several professors. And it was then no rare thing for young gentlemen, that had no design of engaging themselves in any of the three learned professions, of law, physic, or divinity, to spend some time at that college. Then, and there, it pleased the Lord, who had separated him from his mother's womb, to call him by his grace, by the ministry of excellent Mr. Samuel Ruthford, and this young gentleman became one of the first fruits of his ministry at St. Andrew's. His conversion was begun with great terrors of God on his soul, and was completed with that joy and peace in believing that did accompany him through his life. Upon this blessed change wrought in him, he did immediately resolve to obey the call of God, to serve him in the ministry of the gospel, which was given him with the Lord's calling him effectually to grace and glory. And he did for this end so dispose of his outward estate (of which he was born heir,) as not to be entangled with the affairs of this life. After some time spent in

study, he was called to preach, and quickly after was settled in a congregation in the West of Scotland, and did shine in that place, till a few months before his death, that he was driven away by the persecution in 1665. In this place he laboured with great diligence, and with no less success, as himself owned to the Lord's praise, when he said that there was hardly any under his charge but were brought to make a fair profession of godliness, and had the worship of God in their families: and it was well known that many of them were sincere, and not a few of them eminent christians. The love he had to his people made him stifly refuse all calls and invitations to Glasgow, or Edinburgh, or Stirling, where his own cousin, grave Mr. James Guthrie, was minister (afterwards Christ's faithful martyr, whom I saw die in and for the Lord, at Edinburgh, June 1st, 1661,) and pleaded much in a general assembly, that he might have his ministry in that city which was malignant and profane at that time; but all to no purpose. In this place, though an obscure one, but by his ministry, he spent all his few days. I have heard several judicious ministers and christians observe this of him, that whereas many worthy ministers have out-lived their zeal, the vigour of their gifts, and their acceptance with the godly, this blessed man rather increased in all these to the last.

His stature was tall and slender, his aspect grave. His natural temper was cheerful, witty, and facetious, yet tempered with gravity becoming a minister of Christ. I have seen somewhat

of this rare mixture in him myself, and have heard from many who had a great intimacy with him, that they have admired this in him, that immediately after his recreations, and singular sallies of wit and innocent mirth, when called to pray, he would speak to God with that holy awe, and faith, and love, and life, as if he had come down from the mount.

His gifts were great, strong natural parts, a clear head, and a sound heart. His voice was of the best sort; loud, and yet managed with charming cadencies and elevations. His oratory singular, and by it he was master of the passions of his hearers. His action in preaching was more than ordinary; yet was it all decent and taking in him. I have oft thought him in this the likest to the famous Mr. John Rogers, of Dedham, in Essex, by the character I had of him by many; and especially from his kinsman, Mr. William Jenkyn, who died Christ's prisoner, in Newgate, 1684.

In preaching, praying, dealing with distressed consciences, and in pleading for the cause of God in the assemblies of ministers, he was eminent, and generally so esteemed in his day, which I do well remember.

I have heard many passages of God's presence with him, and of his blessing of his labours, which I forbear to mention; both because it is unfit to give a long preface to a short book, and because I am not without hope that some will think it fit to make this great man better known.

The main humbling thing that attended him (next to the apostasy in the land, and cruel per-

secution of the church of Christ in it,) was a crazy body, afflicted much with the stone, and at last with an ulcer in his kidneys, which brought him to his grave, in 1665, when he had lived little above forty-two years.

This was the man that the rulers in Scotland could not then bear: but though the love and esteem that most of the neighbouring nobility and gentry bare to him did prevail, for a year or two, to preserve him in his place, after many of his brethren were cast out; yet at length a party of the king's guards was sent to turn him out, and to put a stranger in his place. Unto which violence he gave way; and went on a visit to his friends, where he was quickly seized with a fit of his distemper, and died, in 1665, in Angus. I have oft seen him, conversed with him, and have heard him preach; and if my youth then did make me an unfit judge of his real great worth, yet his name was so famous, his ministry so followed, especially in his last two or three years, by many ejected ministers, and so many desolate congregations (and both were multiplied in fatal 1662,) that I do but declare what was then the common sense of thousands in Scotland, that Mr. Guthrie was every way an eminent gospel minister. I had also a special advantage for knowing the spirit of this great man. My own honoured father and he, kept, for many years a constant weekly correspondence by letters; many of which from Mr. Guthrie to my father I did peruse, and several of them I have still by me, writ by his own hand.

This was the great man, the author of this small book, and it is all that he ever published. Some small scraps of some of his sermons I have seen in print, published many years after his death by some honest but injudicious hand, that declare little of the true spirit of the author. This much I have said at a slender desire of the re-printer of the book, as judging it both my duty and my honour to declare what I have seen and heard of this excellent person. And if any think strange that I, who am none of the oldest of men, can so freely give a character of a person who hath been near forty years dead, I can tell them, that besides the commonness of this same judgment of him with thousands in the West of Scotland to this day (of whom many will censure this account as very lame and defective,) I have on record by me in writing, for several years, some singular things concerning him, which I forbear to publish.

RO. TRAIL.

London, Jan. 30, 1704–5.

TO THE READER.

CHRISTIAN READER,

WHILE the generality of men, especially in these days, by their eager pursuit after low and base interests, have proclaimed, as upon the house tops, how much they have forgotten to make choice of that better part, which, if chosen, should never be taken from them; I have made an essay, such as it is, in the following treatise, to take thee off from this unprofitable, though painful pursuit, by proposing the chiefest of interests, even, *The Christian's Great Interest*, to be seriously pondered, and constantly pursued by thee. Thou mayest think it strange to see any thing in print from my pen, as it is indeed a surprise to myself: but necessity hath made me for this once to offer so much violence to my own inclination, in regard that some, without my knowledge, have lately published some imperfect notes of a few of my sermons, most confusedly cast together, prefixing withal this vain title, as displeasing to myself as the publishing of the thing, *A clear attractive warming beam, &c.* Upon this occasion was I prevailed with to publish this little piece, wherein I have purposely used a most homely and plain style, lest otherwise (though when I have stretched myself to the utmost, I am below the judi-

cious and more understanding) I should be above the reach of the rude and ignorant, whose advantage I have mainly, if not only, consulted: I have likewise studied brevity in every thing, so far as I conceived it to be consistent with plainness and perspicuity; knowing that the persons to whom I address myself herein have neither much money to spend upon books, nor much time to spare upon reading. If thou be a rigid critic, I know thou mayest meet with several things to carp at; yet assure thyself that I had no design to offend thee, neither will thy single approbation satisfy me; it is thy edification I intend, together with the incitement of some others more expert and experienced in this excellent subject, to handle the same at greater length, which I have more briefly hinted at, who

Am thy servant in the
Work of the gospel,
WILLIAM GUTHRIE.

AN

EPISTLE COMMENDATORY

From a Christian Friend, giving an account of his thoughts upon perusal of this book.

CHRISTIAN FRIEND,

I HAVE sent you by the bearer this book, which by providence came to my hand, and a blessed providence it was to me: for I hope the same mercy that brought it to my hand hath brought by it the Saviour to my heart.

Upon perusal of it, I find such a blessed and happy connection betwixt the gifts and the graces of the spirit, such an holy and humble condescension to my plain capacity, such a serious handling of serious truths, that the language of my heart upon perusal of it was somewhat like that of the woman of Canaan, John iv. 29. "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did;" or rather, all that God hath done in me, and for me. He that hath waded much in the water of foul trouble, may here behold a lively description of the spirit of bondage in all its terrors and troubles: and he who is got out of these, and is sunning his soul in the light of God's countenance, may here behold the light side of the cloud; I mean the spirit of adoption, in all its beautiful colours.

The first part of this book sets forth the soul in a storm, when the law comes thundering to the conscience; the last leads it into a calm of sweet peace and serenity, when the spirit of God comes to a troubled soul, as the Son of God once came to the troubled sea, with a "Peace, be still," Matth. xiv. 29. But if it should not be thus, the believer is here directed to be willing to want what God is not willing to give; and to know he is wise to give when he will, what he will, and how he will. I find now, that peace is sown for the righteous, Psal. lxvii. 11. But all do not reap the crop till they come into Immanuel's land, Isaiah viii. 8. There our joy as well as our light, shall be clear, and our love perfect.

And if there be any more concerned in this piece than others, (though it deals forth its bread to all its young men and young converts,) the latter may here behold, as in a map or mirror, the several providences, and various workings of the blessed spirit, that have all concurred in bringing them home to God; and may take notice of all the inducements and remoras they met with in the way. As Moses was to write a history of the children of Israel *passing through the wilderness*, Numb. xxxiii. 2. so doth this book, with a holy kind of elegancy, describe the spirit's leading the soul out of its bewildered estate into the spiritual Canaan, never leaving it till it come to the mountain of spices, Song viii. 14. out of Satan's gun-shot, where his habitation shall be the munition of rocks, Isaiah xxxvi. 17. Neither is there one

path omitted, so far as I could ever read, or gather from my own or other experience; so that it may not unfitly be termed, "a spiritual day-book of all the passages between the spirit of God and the soul, in its regeneration work;" which is no less profitable than delightful for the believer to be reading over the records of God's love manifested in the gospel: what care and cost he took with him to recover him out of the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity; for trial brings truth to light, and those things which, through many clouds intercepting, may have lost their remembrance in the soul, are here clearly discovered that they have been; although for the present, the believer cries out, how is the gold become dim! how is the fine gold changed; and the looking over past experiences brings a renewed savour, and a spiritual relish, of all those things upon the heart to them who have thus tasted that the Lord is good; at least supports the soul under the want of sensible feeling, whilst it calls to remembrance the days of old, the years of his right hand. But I have done, and yet methinks I can never write enough of the excellency and utility of this piece. The Lord make it is so profitable to others as it hath been to me. To his blessing I leave both you and it, and remain,

Your true
Christian friend,
G. B.

THE

CHRISTIAN'S GREAT INTEREST.

INTRODUCTION.

SINCE there be so many people living under the ordinances, pretending, without ground, to a special interest in Christ, and to his favour and salvation, as is clear, Matt. vii. 22, 23. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matt. xxv. 11, 12. "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know ye not," Luke viii. 24. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." And since many, who have good ground of claim to Christ, are not established in the confidence of his favour, but

remain in the dark, without comfort, hesitating concerning the reality of godliness in themselves, and speaking little to the commendation of religion to others, especially in the time of their straits. I shall speak a little to two things of the greatest concernment: the one is, how a person shall know if he hath a true and special interest in Christ, and whether he doth lay just claim to God's favour and salvation? The other is, in case a person fall short in the foresaid trial, what course he shall take for making sure God's friendship and salvation to himself.

THE

TRIAL

OF A

SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST.

PART I.

QUESTION. *How shall a man know if he hath a true and special interest in Christ, and whether he hath, or may lay claim justly to God's favour and salvation?*

CHAP. I.

A man's interest in Christ may be known.

SECT. 1. *It is a matter of the highest importance, and is to be determined by scripture.*

BEFORE we speak directly to the question, we shall premise some things, to make way for the answer.

FIRST, that a man's interest in Christ, or his gracious state, may be known, and that with more certainty than people do conjecture; yea, and the knowledge of it may be more easily attained unto than many do imagine: for not only hath the Lord commanded men to know their interest to him, as a thing attainable, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine your-

selves whether ye be in the faith," &c. 2 Peter i. 10. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure," &c. but many of the saints have attained unto the clear persuasion of their interest in Christ, and in God as their own God. How often do they call him their God and their portion? and how persuaded is Paul, "That nothing can separate him from the love of God," Rom. viii. 38, 39. Therefore the knowledge of a man's gracious state is attainable.

And this knowledge of it, which may be attained, is no fancy and bare conceit, but it is most sure; "Doubtless thou art our father," saith the prophet, in name of the church, Isaiah lxiii. 16. It is clear thus: (1). That can be no fancy, but a very sure knowledge, which doth yield to a rational man, comfort in most real straits: but so doth this; 1 Sam. xxx. 6. "When the people spake of stoning David, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God." Psal. iii. 6. he saith there, "He will not be afraid of ten thousands that rise against him." Compare these words with ver. 3. of that psalm, "But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me: my glory, and the lifter up of my head." Psal. xxvii. 1. 3. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." (2). That is a sure knowledge of a thing which maketh a wise merchant, sell all he hath that he may keep it sure; that maketh a man forego children, lands, life, and suffer the spoiling of all joyfully: but so doth

this; Matth. xiii. 44. Mark x. 28, 29. Heb. x. 34. Rom. v. 3. Acts v. 41. (3). That must be a sure and certain knowledge, and no fancy, whereupon a man voluntarily and freely doth adventure his soul when he is stepping into eternity, with this word in his mouth, "This is all my desire;" but such a knowledge is this, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

And again, not only may a godly man come to the sure knowledge of his gracious state, but it is more easily attainable than many do apprehend: for supposing, what shall be afterwards proved, that a man may know the gracious work of God's spirit in himself; if he will but argue rationally from thence, he shall be forced to conclude his interest in Christ, unless he deny clear scripture truths. I shall only make use of one here, because we are to speak more directly to this afterwards. A godly man may argue thus, Whosoever receive Christ are justly reputed the children of God, John i. 12. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God;" but I have received Christ all the ways which the word there can import; for I please the device of salvation by Christ; I agree to the terms; I welcome the offer of Christ in all his offices, as a king to rule over me, a priest to offer and intercede for me; a prophet to teach me; I lay out my heart for him and towards him, resting on him as I am able. What else can be meant by the word RECEIVING? Therefore may I say, and conclude fairly and warrantably, I am justly to reckon myself God's child, according to the aforesaid scripture, which cannot fail.

The second thing to be premised is, That a man be savingly in covenant with God is a matter of the highest importance; "It is his life:" Deut. xxxii. 47. and yet very few have or seek after a saving interest in the covenant, and many foolishly think they have such a thing without any solid ground; Matth. vii. 14. "Few find or walk in the narrow way." This should alarm people to be serious about the matter, since it is of so great consequence to be in Christ, and since there be but few that may lay just claim to him: and yet many do foolishly fancy an interest in him, who are deceived by a false confidence, as the foolish virgins do, Matth. xxv.

The third thing to be premised is, men must resolve to be determined by scripture in this matter of their interest in Christ. The spirit speaking in the scripture is judge of all controversies; Isaiah viii. 20. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;" and of this also whether a man be savingly in covenant with God or not. Therefore do not mock God whilst you seem to search after such a thing. If we prove from Scripture, which is the uncontroverted rule, that you are gracious, and have stricken covenant savingly with God, then resolve to grant so much, and to acquiesce in it: and if the contrary appear, let there be a determination of the controversy, else you do but mock the Lord, and so "your bands shall be made strong," Isaiah xxviii. 22.; for "a jot of his word cannot fail," Matth. v. 18, Therefore seek eye salve from Christ to judge of things ac-

cording as the word of God shall discover them to be.

SECT. 2. *Reasons why so few come to the clear knowledge of their Interest in* CHRIST.

The fourth thing to be premised is, although the matter of a man's interest in Christ be of so great importance, and the way to attain to the knowledge of it so plainly held forth in the scriptures, yet there be but few who reach the distinct knowledge of it. And that this may not discourage any person from attempting it, I shall hint some few reasons why so few come to the clear knowledge of it; which will also prepare the way for what is to be spoken afterwards.

The first thing which doth hinder many from the knowledge of their interest in Christ, is their ignorance of some special principles of religion; as (1.) That it was free love in God's bosom, and nothing in man, that moved him to send a Saviour to perfect the work of redemption, John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Men are still seeking some ground for that business in themselves, which leads away from suitable and high apprehensions of the first spring and rise of God's covenant favour to his people, which hath no reason, cause, or motive in us; and so they cannot come to the knowledge of their interest.

(2.) They are ignorant how that love doth effectually discover itself to a man's heart, so as he hath ground to lay claim to it, viz. That ordinarily it doth, 1st, discover his broken state in him-

self, because of sin and corruption defiling the whole man, and any thing in him that might be called a righteousness; "All these things are loss and dung," Philip. iii. 6, 7, 8. 2dly, It discovereth Christ as the full and satisfying treasure above all things; "The man finds a treasure, for which with joy he selleth all," &c. Matth. xiii. 44. 46. 3dly, It determineth the heart, and causeth it to approach unto a living God in the ordinances; Psal. lxv. 4. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts," and causeth the heart to wait upon him, and him alone; Psal. lxii. 5. "My soul, wait thou only upon God." Thus having dropped in the seed of God in the heart, and formed Christ there, Gal. iv. 19. the heart is changed and made new in the foresaid work. Ezek. xxxvi. 26.; and God's law is so stamped upon the heart in that change, Jer. xxxi. 33. that the whole yoke of Christ is commended to the man without exception; Rom. vii. 12. 16. The law is acknowledged good, holy, just, and spiritual. Upon all which, from that new principle of life, there flow out acts of a new life, Gal. v. 6. "faith worketh by love;" Rom. vi. 18. 22. and the man becometh "a servant of righteousness unto God," which doth especially appear in the spirituality of worship, John iv. 24. Rom. vii. 6.; men then "serve God in spirit and truth; and in the newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter;" and tenderness in all manner of conversation; the man then "exerciseth himself

how to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men," Acts xxiv. 16. Now this way doth the love of God discover itself unto man, and acteth on him, so as he hath ground of laying some good claim to it; so as he may justly think that the love which sent a Saviour had respect that such a man as hath found these things made out unto him. Surely ignorance in this doth hinder many from the knowledge of their interest in Christ; for if a man know not how God worketh with a person, so as he may justly lay claim to his love, which was from eternity, he will wander in the dark, and not come to the knowledge of an interest in him.

(3.) Many are also ignorant of this, that God alone is the hope of his people: he is called "the hope of Israel," Jer. xiv. 8. Although inherent qualifications are evidences of it, yet the staying of the heart upon him as a full blessing and satisfying portion is faith; 1 Peter i. 21. "The faith and hope must be in God;" and the only proper condition which giveth right to the saving blessings of the covenant; Rom. iv. 5. "To him that worketh not, but believeth—faith is counted for righteousness." Indeed, if any person take liberty here, and turn grace into wantonness, there is without doubt in so far a delusion; since there "is mercy with him, upon condition that it conciliate fear to him," Psal. cxxx. 4. Yea, hardly can any man who hath found the foresaid expressions of God's love made out upon him, make a cloak of the covenant for sinful

liberty without some measure of a spiritual conflict; in this respect, "he that is born of God doth not sin;" and, "he who doth so sin, hath not seen God," 1 John iii. 6. 9. I say, God is the hope of his people, and not their own holiness. If they intend honesty, and long seriously to be like unto him, many failings should not weaken their hope and confidence, for it is in him "who changeth not," Mal. iii. 6.; "and if any man sinneth, he hath an advocate," 1 John ii. 1. Now, when men place their hope in any other thing beside the Lord, it is no wonder they be kept in a staggering condition, according to the changes of the thing which they make the ground of their hope, since they give not to God the glory due to his name, and which he will not give to another. Compare Psal. ix. 10. "They who know thy name, will put their trust in thee," with Isaiah xlii. 8. "My glory will I not give to another: I am the Lord, that is my name.

(4.) Many are ignorant of the different ways and degrees of God's working with his people, and this doth much darken their knowledge, and reflex acts of their interest in him. This ignorance doth run mainly on three heads, (1.) They are ignorant of the different degrees and ways of that law-work which ordinarily dealeth with men, and of the different ways how the Lord bringeth home people at first to Christ. They consider not that the jailer is not kept an hour in bondage, Acts xvi. Paul is kept in suspense three days, Acts ix. Zaccheus not one moment, Luke xix. (2.) They are ignorant of, at least they do not consider how different the degrees of sanctifica-

tion are in the saints, and the honourable appearings thereof before men in some, and the sad blemishings thereof in others. Some are very blameless, and more free of gross out-breakings, adorning their profession much, as Job, chap. 1. and Zecharias, Luke 1. These are said to be "perfect and upright, fearing God, and eschewing evil; righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless:" others were subject to very gross and sad evils, as Solomon, Asa, &c. (3). They are ignorant of the different communications of God's face, and expressions of his presence. Some do walk much in the light of God's countenance, and are much in sensible fellowship with him, as David was; others are "all their days kept in bondage through fear of death," Heb. ii. 15. Surely the ignorance of the different ways of God's working and dealing with his people doth very much darken the knowledge of their interest in him, whilst they usually stint the Lord to one way of working, which he doth not keep, as we have shewed in the former examples.

The second thing which doth darken men about their interest in Christ is, there is one thing or other wherein their heart in some respect doth condemn them, as dealing deceitfully and guilefully with God. It is not to be expected that these can come to clearness about their interest whose heart doth condemn them for keeping up some known transgression against the Lord, which they will not let go, neither are using the means which they know to be appointed by God for

delivering them from it: neither can these come to clearness who know some positive duty commanded them in their stations, which they deceitfully shift and shun, not closing cheerfully with it, or not willing to be led into it; these are also, in some respect, condemned of their own heart, as the former sort; and in that case it is difficult to come to a distinct knowledge of their state; 1 John iii. 21. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." It is supposed there, that a self-condemning heart maketh void a man's confidence proportionally before God.

I do not deny but that men may on good grounds plead an interest in Christ in the case of prevailing iniquity; Psal. lxv. 3. "Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions thou shalt purge them away." Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25. "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." But it is hard to be attained, if at all attainable, when the heart is dealing deceitfully, and entertaining known guile in a particular: therefore let people clear themselves of the particular which they know too well. It is the thing which doth meet them, marring their confidence and access in all their approaches unto God; see Judges x. 10—13. the idolatries of

the people are cast up to them by the Lord, and their suit rejected thereupon. That which draweth away the heart first in the morning, and last at night, like "an oven heated at night, and it burneth as a flaming fire in the morning," spoken of the wicked, Hosea vii. 6. and taketh up their thoughts often on their bed; as it is said of some, Psal. xxxvi. 4. "He deviseth mischief upon his bed," &c. That which doth lead away the heart in time of religious duty ordinarily, and the remembrance of which hath power to enliven and quicken the spirits more than the remembrance of God, so as "their heart is after the heart of some detestable thing," Ezek. xi. 21.; that which withstandeth men when they would gripe the promise, as God casteth up men's sins to them who are meddling with his covenant, Psal. l. 16, 17. "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" &c. that is the thing which doth mar the knowledge of a gracious state; let it go, and it will be more easy to reach the knowledge of an interest in Christ.

The third thing which hindereth the knowledge of an interest in Christ is, a spirit of sloth and careless negligence in many. They complain that they know not whether they be in Christ or not: but as few take pains to be in him, so few take pains to try if they be in him. It is a work and business which cannot be done sleeping, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves; know ye not your ownselves," &c. The several words used there, viz. examine,

prove, know—say that there is a labour in it; "Diligence must be used to make our calling and election sure," 2 Peter i. 10. It is a business above flesh and blood; the "holy anointing which teacheth all things," 1 John ii. 20. 27. must make us "know the things freely given to us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12. Shall the Lord impart a business of so great concernment, and not so much as "be inquired after to do it for men?" Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Be ashamed, you who spend so much time in reading of romances, in adorning your persons, in hawking and hunting, in consulting the law concerning your outward state in the world, and it may be in worse things than these; be ashamed that you spend so little time in the search of this, whether ye be an heir of glory or not? whether you be in the way that leadeth to heaven, or that way which will land you in darkness for ever? You who judge this below you, and unworthy of your pains any part or minute of your time, it is like, in God's account, you have judged yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, so as you shall have no lot with God's people in this matter.

The fourth thing that doth darken the knowledge of an interest in Christ is, men do not condescend upon what would satisfy them. They complain that God will not shew unto them what he is about to do with them, but cannot yet say they know what would satisfy concerning his purpose. This is a sad thing. Shall we think these are serious who have never as yet pitched on what would satisfy them, nor are making earnest inquiry after what should satisfy? If the

Lord had left us in the dark in that matter, we were less inexcusable; but since the grounds of satisfaction, and the true marks of an interest in Christ, are so clear and frequent in Scripture, and so "many things written, that our joy may be full," 1 John i. 14. and "that those who believe may know that they have eternal life, 1 John v. 13.; and since "he that believeth hath a witness of it in himself," 1 John v. 10. none can pretend excuse here. We may not here insist to show what may and should satisfy concerning our interest, since we are to speak directly to it afterwards.

The fifth thing that helpeth much to keep men in the dark concerning their interest in Christ is, they pitch upon some mutual grounds, which are not so opposite proofs of the truth of an interest in Christ as of the comfortable state of a triumphing soul sailing before the wind; and marks, which I grant are precious in themselves, and do make out an interest clearly where they are; yet they are such as without which an interest in Christ may be, and be known also in a good measure. We shall touch a few of them.

1st. Some think that all who have a true interest in him are above the prevailing power of every sin: but this is contrary to that of Psal. lxv. 3. 'Iniquities prevail against me; 'as for our transgressions thou shalt purge 'them away:' where we find that holy man laying just claim to pardon, in the cause of prevailing iniquity; and that of Rom. vii. 23, 24, 25. where 'Paul thanketh God through 'Christ, as free from the condemnation of "the law, even whilst

a law in his members "leadeth captive unto sin."

2dly. Some think that all true saints have constantly access unto God in prayer, and sensible returns of prayer at all times: but this is contrary to the many sad exercices of his people, complaining often that they are not heard nor regarded of God, Psal. xiii. 1. "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Psal. xxii. 1, 2. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent."

3dly. Some think that all who have any true interest in him have God witnessing the same unto them by a high operation of that witnessing spirit of his, spoken of Rom. viii. 16. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;" whereof afterwards: and so they still suspect their own interest in Christ, because of the want of this. But they do not remember that they must first believe and give credit to that "record which God hath given of the Son, that there is life enough in him" for men, 1 John v. 10, 11. and then look for the seal and witness of the spirit; Eph. i. 13. "In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise," &c. As long as people hold fast these principles, and the like, they can hardly come to the knowledge of their gracious state, which God hath warranted people to prove and clear up to themselves, otherwise than by these foresaid things.

SECT. 3. *Some mistakes concerning an Interest in Christ removed.*

THE fifth thing to be premised is, the removal of some mistakes whereinto people may readily run themselves, when we are about to prove their interest in Christ.

As, 1st. It is a mistake to think that every one who is in Christ doth know that he is in him; for many are truly gracious, and have a good title to eternal life, who do not know so much, until it be made out afterwards; 1 John v. 13. "These things are written to believers, that they may know they have a true title to eternal life;" that is, that they may know they are believers, and so it is supposed they knew it not before.

2dly. It is a mistake to think that all who come to the knowledge of their interest in Christ do attain an equal certainty about the same. One may say, "He is persuaded nothing present or to come, can separate him from the love of God," Rom. viii. 38. another cometh but this length, "I believe, help my unbelief," Mark ix. 24.

3dly. It is a mistake to think that every one who attaineth a strong persuasion of his interest doth always hold there; for he who to-day may say of the Lord, "He is his refuge," Psal. xci. 2. and "his portion," Psal. cxix. 57. will at another time say, "He is cut off," Psal. xxxi. 22. and will ask, "if the truth of God's promise doth fail for ever more?" Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9.

4thly. It is also a mistake to think that every one who doth attain a good knowledge of their gracious state can formally answer all objections

made to the contrary; but yet they may hold fast the conclusion, and say, "I know whom I have believed;" 2 Tim. i. 12. There be few grounds of the Christian religion, whereof many people are so persuaded, as that they are able to maintain them formally against all arguments brought to the contrary; and yet they may and will hold the conclusion steadfastly and justly: so it is in this case in hand.

5thly. It is no less a mistake to imagine, that the vain groundless confidence, which many profane ignorant Athelsts do maintain, is this knowledge of an interest in Christ which we plead for. Many do falsely avow him "to be their father," John viii. 41. and many look for heaven who will be beguiled with those "foolish virgins," Matth. xxv. 12.: yet we must not think, because of this, that all knowledge of an interest is a delusion and fancy, although these fools be deceived; for whilst thousands are deluded, some can say on good and solid grounds, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John v. 19.

CHAP. II.

SECT. 1. *The ways by which the Lord draweth some to Christ, without a sensible preparatory Law-work.*

HAVING premised these things, it now followeth that we give some marks by which a man may know if he be savingly in covenant with God, and hath a special interest in Christ, so as he may warrantably lay claim to God's favour and salvation. We shall only pitch upon two

great and principal marks, not willing to trouble people with many.

But before we fall upon these, we will speak of a preparatory work of the law, whereof the Lord doth ordinarily make use, to prepare his own way in men's souls. This may have its own weight, as a mark, with some persons. It is called the work of the law, or the work of humiliation. It hath some proportion to that "spirit of bondage," Rom. viii. 15. and doth now under the New-Testament answer unto it, and usually leadeth on to the "spirit of adoption."

Only, here let it be remembered, 1. That we are not to speak of this preparatory work of the law, as a negative mark of a true interest in Christ, as if none might lay claim to God's favour who has not had this preparatory work, in the several steps of it, as we are to speak of it; for, as we shall hear, the Lord doth not always keep that path with men. 2. The great reason why we speak of it is, because the Lord dealeth with many, whom he doth effectually call, by some such preparatory work: and to those who have been so dealt with, it may prove strengthening, and will confirm them in laying the more weight on the marks which follow. 3. It may help to encourage others who are under such bondage of spirit, as a good prognostic of a gracious work to follow; for as we shall circumstantiate it, it will be rarely found to miscarry and fail of a gracious issue. 4. Where God useth such a preparatory work, he doth not keep one way or measure in it, as we shall hear.

For the more distinct handling of this preparatory work, we shall shortly hint the most ordinary ways by which the Lord leadeth people in unto the covenant savingly, and draweth them unto Christ.

First, There are some called from the womb, as John the Baptist was, Luke i. 41. 44. or in their very young years, before they can be deeply engaged actively in Satan's ways, as Timothy, 2 Tim. iii. 15. It cannot be supposed that those have such a preparatory work as we are to speak of. And because some persons may pretend to this way of effectual calling, we offer these marks of it, whereby those who have been so called may be confirmed.

1st. Such use from their childhood to be kept free of ordinary pollutions wherewith children usually are defiled: as swearing, lying, mocking of religion and religious persons, &c. Those whom God calleth effectually he sanctifieth them from the time of that effectual calling: "Sin cannot have dominion over them" as over others, "because they are under grace," Rom. vi. 14.

2dly. Religion is, as it were, natural to them; I mean they need not be much pressed to religious duties even when they are but children; they run willingly that way, because there is an inward principle of "love constraining them," 2 Cor. v. 14. so as "they yield themselves servants of righteousness," without outward constraint, Rom. vi. 16.

3dly. Although such know not when they were first acquainted with God, yet they have afterwads such exercises of spirit befalling, as the

saints in scripture, of whose first conversion we hear not, do speak of. They are shut out from God, upon some occasion, now and then, and are admitted to come nearer again to their apprehension; their heart is also further broken up by the ordinances, as is said of Lydia, Acts xvi. 14. And ordinarily they do remember when some special enjoyment of religion and duty, or when some sin, of which they were not taking notice before, was discovered to them. They who can apply these things to themselves, have much to say for their effectual calling from their youth.

Secondly, Some are brought into Christ in a sovereign gospel way, when the Lord, by some few words of love swallowing up any law-work, quickly taketh a person prisoner at the first, as he did Zaccheus, Luke xix. and others, who, upon a word spoken by Christ, did leave all and follow him; and we hear no noise of a law-work dealing with them before they close with Christ Jesus.

And because some may pretend to this way of calling, we shall touch some things most remarkable in that transaction with Zaccheus, for their clearing and confirmation. (1.) He had some desire to see Christ, and such a desire as made him wave that which some would have judged prudence and discretion, whilst he climbeth up upon a tree that he might see him. (2.) Christ spoke to his heart, and that word took such hold upon him, that presently with joy he did accept of Christ's offer and closeth with Christ as Lord, whilst few of any note were following him. (3.) Upon this his heart doth open

to the poor, although it seems he was a covetous man before. (4.) He hath a due impression of his former ways, evidencing his respect to Moses' law, and this he doth signify before all the company then present, not caring to shame himself in such things as probably were known to the world. (5.) Upon all these things, Christ confirmeth and ratifieth the bargain by his word: recommending to him that oneness of interest which behoved to be between him and the saints, and the thoughts of his own lost condition if Christ had not come and sought him and found him: all which are clear, Luke xix. 3. 10.

We grant the Lord calleth some so, and if any can lay claim to the special things we have now hinted, they have a good confirmation of God's dealing with them from that scripture; neither are they to vex themselves because of the want of a distinct preparatory law-work, if their heart hath yielded unto Christ; for a law-work is not desirable, except for this end. Therefore Christ doth offer himself directly in the scripture, and people are invited to come to him: and although many will not come to him who is the cautioner, until the spirit of bondage distress them for their debt, yet if any, upon the knowledge of their lost estate, would flee and yield to Christ, none might warrantably press a law-work upon them.

As for others, whom Christ persuaded by a word to follow him; whatsoever he did, or howsoever he spake to them, at his first meeting with them, we must rationally suppose that then he discovered so much of their own neces-

sity, and his own fulness and excellency to them, as made them quit all and run after him: and if he do so to any, we crave no more, since there is room enough there for the Physician.

So that from all this, as some may be confirmed and strengthened, with whom God hath so dealt, so there is no ground nor occasion for deluded souls to flatter themselves in their condition, who remain ignorant and senseless of their own miseries, and Christ's all-sufficiency, and hold fast deceit.

Thirdly, There are some brought in to Christ, in a way yet more declarative of his free grace; and this is, when he effectually calleth men at the hour of death. We find somewhat recorded of this way in that pregnant example of the "thief on the cross," Luke xxiii. 39—43. Although this seems not very pertinent for the purpose in hand, yet we shall speak a little of it, that on the one hand men may be sparing to judge or pass sentence upon either themselves or others before the last gasp; and we shall so circumstantiate it, that, on the other hand, none may dare to delay so great a business to the last hour of their life.

We find these things remarkable in that business between Christ and the thief. 1. The man rebuketh his former companion. 2. He dareth not speak a wrong word of God, whose hand is on him, but justifieth him in all that is befallen him. 3. He now seeth Jesus Christ persecuted by the world without a cause, and most injuriously. 4. He discovereth Christ to be a Lord and a King, while enemies seem to have him under their power. 5. He believeth a certainty of glory

after death so really, that he preferreth a portion of it to the present safety of his bodily life, which he knew Christ was able to grant to him at that time, and might have chosen that with the other thief. 6. Although he was much abased in himself, and so humbled, that he pleaded but that Christ would remember him, yet he was nobly daring to throw himself upon the covenant, on life and death; and he had so much faith of Christ's all-sufficiency, that he judged a simple remembrance from Christ would satisfyingly do his business. 7. He acquiesced sweetly in the word which Christ spoke to him for the ground of his comfort. All which are very clear in the case of that poor dying man, and do prove a very real work of God upon his heart.

As this example may encourage some to wait for good from God, who cannot as yet lay clear claim to any gracious work of his spirit; so we conjure all, as they love their souls, not to delay their soul's business, hoping for such a cast of Christ's hand in the end, as too many do; this being a rare miracle of mercy, with the glory whereof Christ did honourably triumph over the ignominy of his cross; a parallel of which we shall hardly find in all the scripture beside. Yea, as there be but few at all saved, Mat. xx. 16. "Many be called, but few chosen;" and most few saved this way; so the Lord hath peremtorily threatened to laugh at the calamity, and not to hear the cry of such as mocked formerly at his reproof, and would not hear when he called to them; Prov. i. 24, 25, 26. "Because I have called and ye refused, I have

stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." Which scripture, although it doth not shut mercy's door upon any, who at the hour of death do sincerely judge themselves, and flee to Christ as this penitent thief did; yet it is certain, it implieth that very few who neglect the offer until then, are honoured with repentance as he was; and so their cry, as not being sincere, and of the right stamp, shall not be heard.

SECT. 2. *The work of the law by which the Lord prepares his way into men's souls; which is either more violent and sudden, or more calm and gradual.*

The fourth and most ordinary way by which many are brought into Christ is by a clear and discernible work of the law and humiliation; which we ordinarily call the spirit of bondage, as was hinted before. We do not mean that every one whose conscience is weakened with sin and fear of wrath doth really close with Christ, the contrary doth appear in Cain, Saul, Judas, &c. But there is a conviction of sin, an awakening of conscience and work of humiliation, which, as we shall circumstantiate it, doth rarely miscarry or fail of a gracious issue, but ordinarily doth resolve into the spirit of adoption, and a gracious work of God's spirit. And because the Lord dealeth with many sinners this way, and we find that many are much puzzled about the giving judgment of this law-work, we shall speak of it particularly.

This work is either more violent and suddenly dispatched, or it is more gentle and protracted through a greater length of time, so as the steps of it are very discernible. It is more violent in some, as in the jailer, Paul and some other converts in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, on whom Christ did break in at an instant, and fell on them as with fire and sword, and led them captive terribly. And because some great legal shakings are deceitful, and turn to nothing, if not worse, we shall point at some things remarkable in these converts spoken of before, which did prove the work of the law on them to have had a gracious issue and result.

1st. Some word of truth or dispension putteth the person to a dreadful stand, with a great stir in the soul; "some are pricked in heart," Acts ii. 37. "some fall on trembling," Acts xvi. 29. And this is such a stir, that the person is brought to his wit's end: "What wilt thou have me to do?" saith Paul, Acts ix. 6. "what must I do to be saved?" saith the jailer, Acts xvi. 30.

2dly. The person is content to have salvation and God's friendship on any terms, as the question does import, "What shall I do?" As if he had said, What would I not do? What would I not forego? What would I not undergo?

3dly. The person accepteth the condition offered by Christ and his servants, as is clear in the forecited scriptures.

4thly. The person presently becometh of one interest with the saints, joining himself with that persecuted society, putting respect on those

whom he had formerly persecuted, joining and continuing with them in the profession of Christ on all hazards. Those with whom the Lord hath so dealt have much to say for a gracious work of God's spirit in them; and it is like, many of them can date their work from such a particular time and word, or dispensation, and can give some account of what passed between God and them, and of a sensible change following in them from that time forward; as Paul giveth a good account of the work and way of God with him afterwards, Acts xxii.

Again, the Lord sometimes carrieth on this work more calmly, softly, and gently, protracting it so, as the several steps of men's exercise under it are very discernible. It would draw a great length to enlarge every step of it; we shall touch the most observable things in it.

1st. The Lord layeth siege to men, who, it may be, have often refused to yield to him, offering himself in the ordinances; and by some word preached, read, or borne in on the mind, or by some providence leading in unto the word, he doth assault the house kept peaceably by the strong man, the devil; and thus Christ, who is the stronger man, cometh upon him, Luke xi. 22. and, by the spirit of truth, doth fasten the word on the man, in which God's curse is denounced against such and such sins, whereof the man knoweth himself guilty. The spirit convinceth the man, and bindeth it upon him, that he is the same person against whom the word of God doth speak, because he is guilty of such sins; and from some sins the man is led on to see more, until ordinarily he come to see the sins

of his youth, sins of omission, &c.; yea, he is lead on until he see himself guilty almost of the breach of the whole law; he seeth "innumerable evils compassing him," as David speaketh in a fit of exercise, Psal. xl. 12. A man sometimes will see ugly sights of sin in this case, and is sharp-sighted to reckon a greatness to every sin almost. Thus "the spirit cometh and convinceth of sin," John xvi. 8.

2dly. The Lord shaketh a special strong hold in the garrison, a refuge of lies, to which the man betaketh himself when his sins are thus discovered to him. The poor man pretendeth to faith in Christ, whereby he thinks his burden is taken off him, as the Pharisees said, John viii. 41. "We have one father, even God;" they pretend to a special relation to God as a common Lord. The Spirit of God beats the man from this by the truth of the scriptures, proving that he hath no true faith, and so no interest in Christ, nor any true saving grace; shewing clear differences between true grace and the counterfeit fancies which the man hath in him; and between him and the truly godly, as Christ laboureth to do to those in John viii. 42. 44. "If God were your father, ye would love me. ye are of the devil, for ye do the lusts of such a father." So "fear surpriseth the hypocrite in heart, Isaiah xxxiii. 14.; especially when the Lord discovereth to him conditions, in many of these promises wherein he trusted most, not easily attainable: he now seeth grace and faith another thing than once he judged them to be. We may in some respect apply that word here, "The spirit convinceth him of sin, because he

hath not believed on the Son:" he is particularly convinced of unbelief, John xvi. 9. he seeth now a huge distance between himself and the godly, who he thought before outstripped him only in some unnecessary, proud, hateful preciseness: he now seeth himself deluded, and in the broad way with the perishing multitude; and so, in this sight of his misery, coucheth down under his own burden, which, before this time, he thought Christ did bear for him: he now beginneth to be frightened at the promises, because of that and such other words, "What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth," &c. Psal. l. 16.

3dly. The man becometh careful about his salvation, and beginneth to take it to heart, as the one thing necessary; he is brought to this with the jailer, Acts xvi. 30. "What shall I do to be saved? His salvation becometh the leading thing with him. It was least in his thoughts before, but now it prevaileth, and other things are much disregarded by him. Since his soul is ready to perish, "what shall it profit him to gain the world, if he lose his soul?" Matth. xvi. 26. Some here are much puzzled with the thoughts of an irrevocable decree to their prejudice, and with the fears of uncertain death, which may attack them before they get matters brought to a point; and some are vexed with apprehensions that they are guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is unpardonable, and so are driven a dangerous length, Satan still casting up to them many sad examples of people who have dolefully put an end to their own exercise: but they are in the hand of one who "knoweth how to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 18.

4thly. When a man is thus in hazard of miscarrying, the Lord useth a work of preventing mercy towards him, quietly and under-hand supporting him; and this is by bearing in upon his mind the possibility of his salvation, leading the man to the remembrance of pregnant proofs of God's free and rich grace pardoning gross transgressors, such as Manasseh, who was a bloody idolatrous man, and had correspondence with the devil, and yet obtained mercy, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13. and other scriptures bearing offers of grace and favour indifferently to all who will yield to Christ, whatsoever they have been formerly; so as the man is brought again to this, "What shall I do to be saved?" which doth suppose that he apprehendeth a possibility of being saved, else he would not propound the question. He applieth that or the like word to himself, "It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger, Zeph. ii. 3. He findeth nothing excluding him from mercy now, if he have a heart for the thing.—Although here, it may be, the man doth not perceive that it is the Lord who upholdeth, yet afterwards he can tell, that "When his foot was slipping, God's mercy held him up;" Psal. xciv. 17, 18. As the Psalmist speaketh in another case. And he will afterwards say, when he "was as a beast, and a fool, in many respects, God held him by the hand," Psal. lxxiii. 22, 23.

5thly. After this discovery of a possibility to be saved, there is a work of desire quickened in the soul; which is clear in that same expression, "What shall I do to be saved?" But sometimes

this desire is airthed amiss, whilst it goeth out thus, "What shall I do that I may work the works of God?" John vi. 28. In which case the man, formerly perplexed with fear and care about his salvation, would be at some work of his own to extricate himself; and here he suddenly resolveth to do all that is commanded, and to forego every evil way (yet much neglecting Christ Jesus,) and so beginneth to take some courage to himself again, "establishing his own righteousness, but not submitting unto the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. Whereupon the Lord maketh a new assault on him, intending the discovery of his absolutely broken state in himself, that so room may be made for the cautioner; as Joshua did to the people, when he found them so bold in their undertakings, Joshua xxiv. 18, 19. "Ye cannot serve the Lord," saith he, "for he is a holy God, a jealous God," &c. In this new assault the Lord, 1. bends up against the man the spirituality of the law; the commandment cometh with a new charge in the spiritual meaning of it, Rom. vii. 9. "The law came," saith Paul, viz. in the spiritual meaning of it: Paul had never seen such a sight of the law before. 2. God most holily doth loose the restraining bonds which he had laid upon the man's corruption, and suffereth it not only to boil and swell within, but to threaten to break out in all the outward members. Thus sin groweth bold, and kicketh at the law, becoming exceeding sinful, Romans vii. 8, 9. "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. For I was

alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. Ver. 13. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." 3. The Lord doth discover to the man, more now than ever before, the uncleanness of his righteousness, and what spots are in his best things. These things kill the man, and he dieth in his own conceit, Rom. vii. 9. and despaireth of relief in himself, if it come not from another airth.

6thly. After many ups and downs here, ordinarily the man resolveth some retirement; he desireth to be alone, he cannot keep company as before. Like those in a besieged city, who, when they see they cannot hold out, and would be glad of any good condition from the besieging enemy, go to a council, that they may resolve somewhat; so the man here retireth, that he may speak with himself. This is like that "communing with our own heart," Psal. iv. 4. Thus God leadeth to the wilderness, that he may speak to the heart," Hosea ii. 14. When the person is retired, the thoughts of his heart, which were scattered in former steps of the exercise, do more observably throng in here. We shall reduce them into this method. (1.) The man thinks of his unhappy folly in bearing arms against God; and here there be large thoughts of former ways, with a blushing countenance and self-loathing; Ezek. xxxvi.31. "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways,

and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight," &c. like that of Psal. li. 3. "His sin is ever before him." (2.) Then he remembereth how many fair opportunities of yielding to God he hath basely lost: his spirit is like to faint when he remembereth that, as is said in another case, Psal. xlii. 4, 6, 7. "When I remember these things I pour out my soul in me.—O my God, my soul is cast down within me.—Deep calleth unto deep, all thy waves are gone over me." (3.) He now thinks of many Christians whom he mocked and despised in his heart, persuading himself now that they are happy, as having chosen the better part; he thinks of the condition of those who wait on Christ, as the Queen of Sheba did of Solomon's servants; "Happy are thy servants," saith she, "who stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom," 1 Kings x. 8. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house," &c. Psal. lxxxiv. 4. He wisheth to be one of the meanest who have any relation to God; as the prodigal son doth speak, he would be as "one of the Father's hired servants," Luke xv. 17. 19. (4.) Then he calleth to mind the good report that is gone abroad of God, according to that testimony, Jonah iv. 2. The prophet knew that God was a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness," &c. The free and large promises and offers of grace come in here; and the glorious practices which have past upon sinners of all sorts, according to the fame of God in scripture. (5.) He thinks with himself, why hath God

spared me so long? and why have I got such a sight of my sin? and why hath he kept me from breaking prison at my own hand, in choosing some unhappy outgate? why hath he made this strange change on me? It may be it is in his heart to do me good; O that it may be so!—Although all these thoughts be not in the preparatory work of every one, yet they are with many, and very promising where they are.

7thly. Upon all these thoughts and meditations, the man, more seriously than ever before, resolveth to pray, and to make some essay with God, upon life and death; he concludeth, "It can be no worse with him; for if he sit still he perisheth;" as the lepers speak, 2 Kings vii. 3, 4. He considereth, with the pinched prodigal son, "that there is bread enough in the Father's house and to spare, whilst he perisheth for want;" so he goeth to God, for he knoweth not what else to make of his condition, as the prodigal son doth, Luke xv. 17, 18. And it may be, here he resolveth what to speak; but readily things do vary when he is offering before God, as the prodigal son forgot some of his premeditated prayers, Luke xv. 18, 19, 21. "I will rise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose and came unto his Father, and said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

And now, when he cometh before God, more observably than ever before. 1st. He beginneth, with the publican, afar off, Luke xviii. 13. with many thorough confessions and self-condemnings, whereof he is very liberal, as Luke xv. 21. "I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy," &c. 2dly. Now begin his thoughts concerning the hearing of his prayer which he was not wont to question much; he now knows what those expressions of the saints about the hearing of their prayers do import. 3dly. It is observable in this address, that there are many broken sentences, like that of Psal. vi. 3. "But thou O Lord, how long?" supplied with sighs and "groanings which cannot be uttered." Rom. viii. 26. and greedy looking upward, thereby speaking more than can be well expressed by words. 4thly. There be ordinarily some interruptions, and, as it were, diversions; the man speaking sometimes to the enemy, sometimes to his own heart, sometimes to the multitude in the world, as David doth in other cases, Psal. ix. 6. "O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end." Psal. xlii. 5. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." Psal. iv. 2. "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?" 5thly. It is observable here that sometimes the man will halt and be silent, to hear some indistinct whispering of a joyful sound glancing on the mind, or some news in some broken word of scripture, which, it may be, the man scarcely knoweth to

be scripture, or whether it is come from God, or whether an injection from Satan to delude him; yet this he hath resolved, only to "hear what God the Lord will speak," as upon another occasion, Psal. lxxxv. 8. 6thly. More distinct promises come into the man's mind, whereupon he assayeth to lay hold, but is beaten off with objections, as in another case the Psalmist is, Psal. xxii. 3. 6. "But thou art holy—But I am a worm." Now it is about the dawning of the day with the man, and faith will stir as soon as the Lord imparteth "the joyful sound," Psal. lxxxix. 15. This is the substance of the covenant, which may be shortly summed up in these words, "Christ Jesus is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

We can speak no further of the man's exercise as a preparatory work; for what followeth is more than preparatory: yet that the exercise may appear complete and full, we shall add here, that after all these things, the Lord, it may be, after many answers of divers sorts, mightily conveyeth the sound of his covenant into the heart, and determineth the heart to close with it; and God now draweth so to Christ, John vi. 44. and so shapeth out the heart for him, that the conception cannot miscarry; for now the heart is so in breadth and length for him as that less cannot satisfy, and more is not desired; like that of Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? or whom have I desired on earth beside thee?" The soul now resolveth to die if he command so, yet at his door, and facing to him-wards.

We have drawn this preparatory work to some length, not tying any man to such a work so

circumstantiated: only, we say the Lord dealeth so with some; and where he so convinceth of sin, corruption and self emptiness, and maketh a man take salvation to heart as the one thing necessary, and setteth him on work in the use of the means which God hath appointed for relief; I say such a work rarely shall be found to fail of a good issue and gracious result.

SECT. 3. *The difference betwixt that preparatory law-work which hath a gracious issue, and the convictions of hypocrites.*

OBJECT. Hypocrites and reprobates have great stirrings of conscience, and deep convictions about sin, sitting them on work sometimes, and I do suspect any preparatory work of the law I ever had to be but such as they have.

ANSWER. It will be hard to give sure essential differences between the preparatory work in those in whom afterwards Christ is formed, and those legal stirrings which are sometimes in reprobates. If there were not some gracious result of these convictions and wakenings of conscience in the Lord's people, and other marks, of which we shall speak afterwards, it were hard to adventure upon any difference that is clear in these legal stirrings. Yet, for answer to the objection, I shall offer some things, which rarely will be found in the stirrings of reprobates, and which are ordinarily found in that law-work which hath a gracious issue.

1st. The convictions of hypocrites and reprobates are usually confined to some few very gross transgressions. Saul grants no more but

the persecuting of David, 1 Sam. xxvi. 21. Judas grants only the betraying of innocent blood, Matth. xxvii. 4.: but usually those convictions, by which the Lord prepareth his own way in the soul, although they may begin at one or more gross particular transgressions, yet they stop not; but the man is led on to see many breaches of the law, and "innumerable evils compassing him." as David speaketh in the sight of his sin, Psal. xl. 12. And withal, that universal conviction, if I may call it so, is not general, as usually we hear senseless men saying, "that in all things they sin;" but it is particular and condescending, as Paul afterwards spake of himself; he not only is the chief of sinners, but particularly, he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, 1 Tim. i. 13.

2dly. The convictions which hypocrites have, do seldom reach their corruption, and that body of death, which breeds an averseness from what is good, and strongly inclineth to what is evil. Ordinarily where we find hypocrites speaking of themselves in scripture, they speak loftily, and with some self-conceit, both as to their freedom from corruption. John ix. 34. The pharisees say to the poor man, 'Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?' as if they themselves were not as corrupt by nature as he: they speak of great sins, as Hazael did, 2 Kings viii. 13. 'Am I a dog, that I 'should do this great thing?' and also in their undertakings of duty, as that scribe spake, Matth. viii. 19. "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." See how the people do speak, Jer. xlii. 2—6. They undertake to do all that God will command them;

so that they still "go about," in any case, "to establish their own righteousness, not submitting unto the righteousness "of God," Rom. x. 3. But I may say that convictions and exercise about corruption and that body of death, inclining to evil, and disenabling for good, is not the least part of the work where the Lord is preparing his own way. They use to judge themselves very wretched because of a body of sin, and are at their wits end how to be delivered, as Paul speaketh, when he is under the exercise of it afterwards, Rom. vii. 24. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

3dly. It will ordinarily be found, that the convictions which are in hypocrites either are not so serious, as that some other business will not put them out of head before any satisfaction be gotten; as in Cain, who went and built a city, and we hear no more of his convictions, Gen. iv. Felix went away until a more convenient time, and we hear no more of his trembling, Acts xxiv. 25.: or, if that work become very serious, then it runneth to the other extremity, and despair of relief, leaving no room for any outgate. So we find Judas very serious in his convictions, yet he grew desperate and hanged himself, Matth. xxvii. 4, 5. But where the Lord prepareth his own way, the work is both so serious as the person cannot be put off it, until he find some satisfaction, and yet under that very seriousness he lieth open for relief: both which are clear in the jailer's words, "What must I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. This serious inquiry after relief is a very observable thing in the preparatory

work which leadeth on to Christ. Yet we desire none to lay too much weight on these things, since God hath allowed clear differences between the precious and the vile.

OBJECT. I still fear I have not had so thorough a sight of my sin and misery as the Lord giveth to many whom he effectually calleth, especially to great transgressors, such as I am.

ANSWER. It is true, the Lord discovereth to some, great sights of their sin and misery, and they are thereby put under great legal terrors: but as all are not brought in by that sensible preparatory law-work, as we shewed before, so even those who are dealt with after that way are very differently and variously exercised in regard of the degrees of terror, and of the continuance of that work. The jailer hath a violent work of very short continuance; Paul hath a work continuing three days; some persons are "in bondage through fear of death all their days," Heb. ii. 15. So that we must not limit the Lord to one way of working here. The main thing we are to look unto in these legal wakenings and conviction of sin and misery is, if the Lord reach those ends in us for which usually these stirrings and convictions are sent into the soul, and if those ends be reached, it is well; we are not to vex ourselves about any preparatory work further. Now, those ends which God pursueth ordinarily with sinners by these legal terrors and awakenings of conscience are four.

FIRST. The Lord discovers sights of men's sin and misery to them, to chace them out of themselves, and to put them out of conceit of

their own righteousness. Men naturally have great thoughts of themselves, and do incline much to the covenant of works; the Lord therefore doth discover to them so much of their sin and corruption, even in their best things, that they are made to loathe themselves, and to despair of relief in themselves; and so they are forced to flee out of themselves, and from the covenant of works, to seek refuge elsewhere, Heb. vi. 18. "They become dead to themselves and the law," as to the point of justification, Rom. vii. 4. Then "have they no more confidence in the flesh," Philip. iii. 3. This is supposed in the offers of Christ "coming to seek and save that which is lost," Luke xix. 10. and to be a physician to those who are sick," Matth. ix. 12.

The second great end is, to commend Christ Jesus to men's hearts above all things, that so they may fall in love with him, and betake themselves to that treasure and jewel which only enricheth, Matth. xiii. 44, 46. and, by so doing, may serve the Lord's design in the contrivement of the gospel, which was the manifestation of his free grace through Christ Jesus in the salvation of men. The sight of a man's own misery and damnable estate by nature is a ready way to make him prize Christ highly, who alone can set such a wretch at liberty: yea, it not only leadeth a man to an high esteem of Christ, but also of all things that relate to that way of salvation, as grace, the new covenant, faith, &c. and maketh him carefully to gather and treasure up his Michtams or golden Scriptures, for the confirmation of his interest in these things.

The third great end is, to deter and frighten people from sin, and to make them cast out with it, and consent to put their neck under all his yoke. God kindleth some sparks of hell in men's bosoms by the discovery of their sin, as a ready mean to make them henceforth stand in awe, knowing "how bitter a thing it is to depart from the Lord," Jer. ii. 19. So we find rest offered to the weary, upon condition they will take on Christ's yoke; Matth. xi. 29. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And God offereth to own men as their God and Father, upon condition they will allow no peaceable abode to Belial, 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 17, 18. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

The fourth great end is, to work up men to a patient and thankful submission to all the Master's pleasure. This is a singular piece of work, Ezek. xvi. 63. "Then shalt thou remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord." The sight of a man's own vileness and deservings maketh him silent, and

to lay his hand on his mouth whatsoever God doth unto him? Ps. xxxix. 9. "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." Ezra ix. 13. "God hath punished us less than our iniquities. Micah vii. 9. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned." The man careth not what God doth to him, or how he deal with him, if he save him from the deserved wrath to come: also any mercy is a large mercy to him who hath seen such a sight of himself; he is "less than the least of mercies," Gen. xxxii. 10.; "any crumb falling from the Master's table is welcome," Mat. xv. 27.: he thinks it rich "mercy that he is not consumed," Lam. iii. 22. This is the thing that marvellously maketh God's poor crossed people so silent under, and satisfied with their lot; nay, they think he deserveth hell who openeth his mouth at any thing God doth to him, since he hath pardoned his transgressions.

So then, for satisfying the objection, I say, if the Lord hath driven thee out of thyself, and commended Christ to thy heart above all things, and made thee resolve, in his strength, to wage war with every known transgression, and thou art in some measure as a weaned child, acquiescing in what he doth unto thee, desiring to lay thy hand on thy mouth thankfully; then thy convictions of sin and misery, and whatsoever thou dost plead as a preparatory work, is sufficient, and thou art to debate no more concerning it. Only be advised so to study new discoveries of the sense of thy lost condition every day, be-

cause of thy old and new sins; and also to see fresh help in Christ, who is a priest for ever to make intercession; and to have the work of sanctification and patience with thankfulness renewed and quickened often: for somewhat of that work which abaseth thee, exalteth Christ, and conformeth to his will, must convey thee throughout all thy lifetime in this world.

CHAP. III.

Sect. 1. *Of Faith.*

We come now to speak of some more clear and sure marks, by which men may take up their gracious state and interest in Christ. The first thing whereby men may know it, is, their closing with Christ in the gospel, wherein he is held forth. This is believing, or faith, which is the condition of the covenant; Rom. iv. 16. "It is of faith," &c. Acts xvi. 31. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Now, although in propriety of speech, it is hard to prove an interest by faith, it being our very interest in him; yet the heart's closing with Christ Jesus is so discernible in itself, that we may well place it amongst the marks of a gracious state: and if a man can make out this, that he believeth on and in Christ Jesus, he thereby doth prove a very true interest in him.

Many are frightened at this as a mark, upon one of these three grounds ordinarily.

(1.) Some conceive faith to be a difficult mysterious thing, hardly attainable. To these I say, do not mistake; faith is not so difficult as many do apprehend it to be. I grant true faith in the meanest degree is the gift of God, and above the

power of flesh and blood; for God must "draw men to Christ," John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." Philip. 1. 29. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ to believe on him." Yet it were a reflection upon Christ, and all he hath done, to say it were a matter of insuperable difficulty; as is clear, Rom. x. 6—11. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." It were according to that scripture, as much upon the matter as to say, Christ came not from heaven, is not risen from the dead or ascended victorious to heaven. I say, he hath made the way to heaven most easy; and faith, which is the condition required on our part, more easy than men do imagine. For the better understanding of this, consider that justifying faith is not to believe that I am elected, or to believe that God loveth me, or Christ died for me, or the like: these things are indeed very difficult, and almost impossible at the first hand to be attained by those

who are serious; whilst natural Atheists and deluded hypocrites find no difficulty in asserting all those things: I say, true justifying faith is not any of the foresaid things; neither is it simply the believing of any sentence that is written, or that can be thought upon. I grant, he that believeth on Christ Jesus believeth what God hath said concerning man's sinful miserable condition by nature, and he believeth that to be true, that "there is life in the Son, who was slain, and is risen again from the dead," &c.: but none of these, nor the believing of many such truths, do speak out justifying faith, or that believing on the Son of God spoken of in scripture; for then it were simply an act of the understanding: but true justifying faith, which we now seek after, as a good mark of an interest in Christ, is chiefly and principally an act or work of the heart and will; having presupposed sundry things about truth in the understanding, with the heart it is believed unto righteousness, Rom. x. 10. And although it seem, ver. 9. of that chapter, that a man is saved upon condition that he believes this truth, "God raised Christ from the dead," yet we must understand another thing there, and ver. 10. than the believing the truth of that proposition: for beside that all devils have that faith, whereby they believe that God raised Christ from the dead, so the scripture hath clearly resolved justifying faith into a receiving of Christ; John i. 12. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." The receiving of Christ is there explained to be the believ-

ing on his name. It is still called a staying on the Lord, Isaiah xxvi. 3. a trusting in God, often mentioned in the Psalms, and the word is a leaning on him. It is a believing on Christ, John vi. 29. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent," and often so expressed in the New Testament. When God maketh men believe savingly, he is said to draw them unto Christ; and when the Lord inviteth them to believe, he calleth them to come to him, John vi. 37. 44. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." The kingdom of heaven is like a man finding a jewel, wherewith he falleth in love, Matth. xiii. 44, 45, 46. Now, I say, this acting of the heart on Christ Jesus is not so difficult a thing as is conceived. Shall that be judged a mysterious difficult thing which doth consist much in desire? If men have but an appetite, they have it; for they are "blessed that hunger after righteousness," Matth. v. 6. "If you will you are welcome," Rev. xxii. 17. Is it a matter of such intricacy and insuperable difficulty greedily to look to that exalted Saviour? Isaiah xlv. 22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:" and to receive a thing that is offered, held forth, and declared to be mine, if I will but accept and take it, and in a manner "open my mouth," and give way to it? Psal. lxxxi. 10. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Such a thing is faith, if not less. Oh, if I could persuade people what is justifying faith, which appropriateth Christ to me! we often

frighten people from their just rest and quiet, by making them to apprehend faith to be some deep mysterious thing, and by moving unnecessary doubts about it, whereby it is needlessly darkened.

(2.) Some make no use of this mark, as judging it a high presumptuous crime to pretend to so excellent a thing as is the very condition of the new covenant. To these I say, you need not startle so much at it, as if it were high pride to pretend to it: for whatsoever true faith be, men must resolve to have it, or nothing at all; all other marks are in vain without it; a thousand things beside will not do the business: "unless a man believe, he abideth in the state of condemnation," John iii. 18. 36. "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

(3.) Others do not meddle with this noble mark of faith, because they judge it a work of the greatest difficulty to find out faith where it is. To these I say, it is not so difficult to find it out, since "he that believeth hath the witness in himself," 1 John v. 10. It is a thing which by some serious search may be known. Not only may we do much to find it out by the preparatory work going before it in many, as the apprehending and believing of a man's lost estate, and that he cannot do his own business, and that there is satisfying fulness in Christ, very desirable if he could overtake it; a serious minding of this, with a heart laid open for relief; as

also by the ordinary companions and concomitants of it, viz, the liking of Christ's dominion, his kingly and prophetical office, a desire to resign myself wholly up to him, to be at his disposing; as also by the native consequences of it, viz. the reconciling of the word, the reconciling of my own conscience according to the word, a heart-purifying work, a working by love, &c.; I say, not only may we know faith by these things, but it is discernible by itself and of its own nature. Although I deny not but there must be some help of God's spirit, "by which we know what is freely given unto us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12. As also, that God hath allowed many evidences and marks as precious helps, whereby men may clear up faith more fully to themselves, 1 John v. 13. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life;" yet I still say that faith or believing, which is some acting of the heart upon Christ in the gospel, and the transacting with him there, is discernible of itself, and by itself, to a judicious understanding person, with an ordinary influence of the spirit; unless the Lord, for reasons known to himself, do overcloud a man's reflex light, by which he should take up and perceive what is in him.

This justifying faith, which we assert to be so discernible, is, in the Lord's deep wisdom and gracious condescension, variously expressed in scripture, according to the different actings of it upon God, and outgoings after him; so as every one who hath it may find and take it up in his own mould. It sometimes acteth by a

desire of union with him in Christ: this is that looking to him in Isaiah xlv. 22. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." This seems to be a weak act of faith, and far below other actings of it at other times perhaps in that same person. Men will look to what they dare not approach, to their apprehension which they dare not touch or embrace; they may look to one whom they dare not speak: yet God hath made the promise to faith in that acting, as the forecited scripture doth shew: and this he hath done mercifully and wisely; for this is the only discernible way of the acting of faith of some persons sometimes. Such are the actings or outgoings of faith expressed in scripture by hungering and thirsting after righteousness," Matth. v. 6. and that expressed by willing, Rev. xxii. 17. "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Again, this faith goeth out sometimes in the act of recumbency, or leaning on the Lord, the soul taking up Christ then as a resting-stone, and God hath so held him out, although he be a stumbling-stone to others, Rom. ix. 33. This acting of it is hinted in the expressions of trusting and staying on God, so often mentioned in scripture; and precious promises are made to this acting of faith, as Isaiah xxvi. 3, 4. "God will keep them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed on him; because such do trust in him. Trust in the Lord; for with him is everlasting strength." So Psal. cxxv. 1. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which abideth forever." I say, the Lord hath made promises to this way of faith's acting, as knowing it

will often go out after him in this way with many persons; and this way of its acting will be most discernible to them.

It goeth out after God sometimes by an act of waiting; when the soul hath somewhat depending before God, and hath not got out his mind satisfyingly concerning that thing, then faith doth wait; and so it hath the promise, Isaiah xlix. 23. "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me." Sometimes it acteth in a wilful way upon the Lord, when the soul apprehendeth God thrusting it away, and threatening its ruin; so Job xiii. 15. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The faith of that poor woman of Canaan, Matth. xv. 22. 28. so highly commended by Christ, did go out in this way of wilful acting over difficulties; and the Lord speaketh much good of it, and to it, because some will be put to it to exercise faith that way sometimes, and so they have that for their encouragement. It were tedious to instance all the several ways of the acting of faith upon, and its exercise about, and outgoing after Christ. I may say according to the various conditions and pressures of the soul of man, the Lord hath variously held out himself and his fulness in Christ, under divers notions, as might most fitly meet the distress or condition of man. And accordingly, faith, which God hath appointed to traffic and travel between Christ and man, as the instrument of conveyance of his fulness unto man, and of maintaining union and communion with him, acteth variously and differently upon God in Christ: for faith is the very shaping out of a man's heart according to God's device of salva-

tion by Christ Jesus, "in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell;" so that, let Christ turn what way he will, faith directeth and pointeth that way. Now he turneth all ways in which he can be useful to poor men; and therefore faith acteth accordingly on him for drawing out of that fulness, according to a man's case and condition. As for example, the soul is naked, destitute of a covering to keep it from the storm of God's wrath, Christ is fine raiment. Rev. iii. 17, 18: then accordingly faith's work here is to "put on the Lord Jesus," Gal. iii. 27. The soul is hungry and thirsty after somewhat that may everlastingly satisfy; Christ Jesus is milk, wine, water, the bread of life, and the true manna," Isaiah lv. 1, 2. John 48. 51. He is "the feast of fat things, and of wine refined," Isaiah xxv. 6.; then the work and exercise of faith is to "go, buy, eat and drink abundantly," Isaiah lv. 1. John vi. 53. 57. The soul is pursued for guilt more or less, and is not law-biding; Christ Jesus is the city of refuge, and the high priest there, during whose lifetime, that is forever, the poor man who gets thither is safe; then the work and exercise of faith is "to flee thither for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us," Heb. vi. 18. In a word, whatsoever way he may benefit poor men, so he speaketh of himself. And as he holdeth out himself in the scripture, so faith doth point towards him. If he be a bridegroom, faith will go out in a marriage relation; if he be a Father, faith pleadeth the man to be a child; if he be a Shepherd, faith pleads the man may be one of his sheep; if he be a Lord, faith calleth him so, which none can

do but by the spirit of Jesus, 1 Cor. xii. 3.; if he be dead, and risen again for our justification, faith "believeth God hath raised him" on that account, Rom. x. 9. Wheresoever he be, there would faith be; and whatsoever he is, faith would be somewhat proportionally: for by faith the heart is shapen out in breadth and length for him; yea, when the fame and report of him goeth abroad in his truth, although faith seeth not much, yet it "believeth on his name," upon the very fame he hath sent abroad of himself, John i. 12.

But here, for avoiding of mistakes, consider (1,) that although justifying faith acteth so variously, yet every believer who hath a good title to Christ Jesus hath not all these various actings and exercises of faith: for his condition craveth them not; and also the master is pleased not to lead out the faith of some persons, at some times, in some of these ways, for reasons known to himself, even when their necessity (to their apprehension) calleth for such acting of faith. Surely, every one dare not say, "though he kill me, yet will I trust in him." Many would not have gone up with the woman of Canaan I spake of, Matth. xv. but would have been discouraged, and have quit the pursuit. It is on this account that Christ doth highly commend the faith of some beyond the faith of others; Matth. viii. 10. of the centurion; Matth. xv. 28. of the woman of Canaan. Many good people are much disquieted concerning their faith, because it goeth not out in all those ways we find recorded in scripture; but there is hardly any man will be found whose faith hath acted all these ways.

(2.) Many of these actings of faith are much intended and remitted. They are sometimes strong and vigorous, and discernible, and sometimes they fail and misbelief doth prevail, so as it were an uncertain thing to judge a man's state by these. We find the saints very different from themselves in regard of the actings of faith sometimes, as we shewed before.

(3.) Each one of these actings of faith speaketh good to the person in whom it is, and hath promises annexed unto it, as we have said. Yet,

(4.) Although these actings of faith have promises annexed unto them, they are not, for that, the condition of the new covenant; for then every one behoved to have each one of them, which is not true, as we said before. A promise is made to him who overcometh; but perseverance is not the condition of the new covenant, but doth suppose it. There are promises made to the exercise of all graces in scripture; but only faith is the condition of the covenant.* I say then,

* It is very evident that our author, here, and in other places calls faith "the condition of the covenant," with a meaning quite different from that which would place faith and obedience in the place of imputed righteousness; and that he does not lay it down as the ground of a sinner's justification before God. Because (1.) he here expressly declares that no fruit of faith can be called by this name; whereas, if he had called faith the condition of the covenant, because it is the ground of a sinner's justification before God, he would have connected good works with it. (2.) In many other places he expressly mentions that the imputed righteousness of Christ is the ground of the sinner's justification.

His meaning is this, that faith in distinction from all other graces of the spirit, is that by which we become instated in the new covenant; and thus attributes nothing more to it than that instrumentality which is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness. This use of the word "*conditton,*" is perfectly consistent with the generic idea of the word. It properly denotes a prerequisite, which prerequisite may

these promises are made to these actings of faith, not as such, but as they do suppose justifying faith, which is the condition of the covenant. All these are actings of faith, but not as it is justifying. Therefore,

(5.) There is somewhat common to all gracious persons, which may be supposed by all the foresaid actings of faith, wherein the nature and essence of justifying faith standeth. And this is the heart's satisfaction concerning God's device of salvation by Christ; when man pleaseth God's invention of satisfaction to justice through Christ Jesus, in whom all fulness doth dwell now by the father's pleasure; when the soul and heart of man acquiesceth in that, then it believeth unto salvation. As at first the Lord made man suitable to the covenant of works by creating him perfect, and so putting him in a capacity to perform his will in that covenant; so, under the new covenant, when God giveth the new heart to man, he setteth the idea and stamp of all his device in the new covenant upon the man, so as there is a consonancy to God's will there; thus he beareth the image of the second Adam, Christ Jesus, on him. This is a great part of the new heart, and is most opposed to works; since now the man absolutely falleth off works, "becoming dead to the law," as to the point of justification "by the body of Christ," Rom. vii. 4. Man perceiving that God hath devised a way of satisfying divine justice,

be either *a quality bestowed*, or a *work performed*. This ambiguity of the word is the reason why our author's use of it has been abandoned by modern evangelical divines. Error loves to clothe itself in ambiguous phrases: Truth does not.

and recovering lost man by the incarnation of Christ, he thinks this so good and sure a way, that he absolutely giveth up with the law, as I said before, and closeth with this device; and this is believing or faith, very opposite to works, and all resting thereupon. This cannot fail to be in all gracious persons, in whom many of the actings of faith are not to be found. This doth clearly suppose known distress in a man, without all relief in himself; this supposeth known fulness in Christ, as the alone sufficient relief; this imports a sort of impropriation; for the heart, pleasing that device, in so far swayeth towards it. This is a thing clearly supposed in all the actings of faith spoken of before. He that greedily hungereth, hath this; and he that leaneth, hath this, and he that puts on Christ, hath this, &c. This is to esteem "Christ the wisdom and power of God" to salvation; so is he said to be to all that believe, 1 Cor. i. 25. They esteem that device wise and sure, beseeming God; and that is to believe. On this account, "Christ, who is the rejected stone to many, is precious to them who believe;" a fit stone to recover, fortify, and beautify the tottering building and fabric of lost man. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious. Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore, also it is contained in the scripture, behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be con-

founded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner: and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed," 1 Peter ii. 4. 8. "The kingdom of God is like a man finding a treasure, for which with joy he selleth all," Matth. xiii. 44. These words hold out the very way of believing, viz. salvation is discovered in the gospel to be by Christ; the heart valueth that invention as satisfying. This is to believe on the Son of God lifted up; which is compared with the looking to the brazen serpent, John iii. 14. It was man's approbation of that device which made it effectual for his healing; so is it here, "He that so believeth, setteth to his seal that God is true," John iii. 33. True! Wherein? In that record he hath borne, that God hath provided life for men, and placed it all in Christ, 1 John v. 10, 11. "He that believeth not, maketh God a liar." Wherein? In his saying that Christ is a safe and sure way to heaven. This is the pleasing and acquiescing in that device: and it is consonant to all I know spoken of justifying faith in scripture. This is the believing on Christ and on his name, the receiving of him, and resting on him for salvation, in our catechism; the believing that Jesus is the Christ, that is, the anointed one, whom the Father hath sealed, and set apart, and qualified for the work of reconciling man unto God; and he "that believeth that Jesus is the Christ,

is born of God," 1 John v. 1. This is to "believe with the heart that God hath raised Christ from the dead," Rom. x. 9. The man believeth Christ died, and is raised on the account of satisfaction for man's transgression. Devils may believe that; nay, but the man I speak of, "believeth it with his heart" (which no natural man doth, until a new heart be given unto him;) that is, he cordially pleaseth, is satisfied with, and acquiesceth in this noble invention. And thus faith layeth out itself now and then in its actings, outgoings and exercise, according to all the covenant relations under which Christ is held forth in the scripture.

Now, I say, this faith is discernible, not only in these actings many times; a man may know if his heart doth hunger after Christ, and flee for refuge to him, when pursued; and if he doth commit himself unto God, &c.; but also in its very nature: as it is justifying, it is discernible, and may be known. A man may clearly know, if from known distress in himself, upon the report and fame of Christ's fulness, his heart doth please God's device in the new covenant; if it goeth out after Christ in that invention, and pleaseth him as Lord of the life of men, terminating and resting there, and no where else; acquiescing in that contrivement with desire and complacency. This is a discernible thing: therefore I obtest men impartially to examine themselves; and if they find that their hearts has closed so with that device of salvation, and is gone out after him as precious, that thereupon they conclude a sure and true interest in Christ Jesus, and a good

claim and title to the crown, since "he that believeth shall never perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. 36.

SECT. 2. *The difference between the faith of hypocrites and true saving justifying faith.*

OBJECT. Hypocrites and reproabtes have a sort of faith, and are said to believe; John ii. 23, 24. Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men." Acts viii. 13. "Then Simon the sorcerer himself believed also;" and cannot choose but go out after Christ, and that device of salvation, when they hear of it; and they profess they do so, yet are deluded, and so may I be.

ANSW. To say nothing of that thought of your heart, whereby you wonder that any man should not please the device of salvation by Christ, and lead out towards him, as a very promising thing, and speaking out justifying faith to be in your bosom; and, to say nothing in contradiction to that which you think, that a natural man, whilst such, and before he get a new heart, can please that device, and believe with his heart, and affectionately, works that which perfectly overthroweth the covenant of and abaseth man in the point of self-righteousness already attained, or that can be attained to by him, which is inconsistent with many scriptural truths; I offer these differences between the faith of all hypocrites or reprobates, and that true saving justifying faith, whereof we have spoken.

1st. They never close with Christ Jesus in that device, and him alone, as a sufficient covering of

the eyes, as is said of Abraham to Sarah, Gen. xx. 16.; they still hold fast somewhat of their own, at least to help to procure God's favour and salvation; their heart doth still speak, as that young man's speech, Luke xviii. 18. 21. doth insinuate, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Beside that, they do still retain their former lovers, and will not break their covenants with hell and death, imagining they may have Christ with these things equally sharing in their heart; contrary to that, "a man cannot serve two masters," Matth. vi. 24. Either Christ must be judged absolute Lord, and worthy to be so, or nothing at all: and so it is clear their heart is not shapen out for that device of salvation by Christ, whom God hath alone made Lord here, in whom all fulness shall dwell. But where justifying faith is the soul of a man, and his heart doth close with Christ, and him alone, having no confidence in the flesh, Philip. iii. Psal. lvi. 4. he trusted only in God. Also the man here giveth up with other lovers; as they are rivals to Christ, he resolves "not to be for another," Hosea iii. 3. He calls him Lord, "which a man can only do by "the spirit of Christ," 1 Cor. xii. 3.

2dly. As hypocrites and reprobates do never close with Christ alone, so they do never close with full Christ, as he is anointed to be a king, to rule over a man in all things; as a priest to procure a pardon, and to make peace for man upon all occasions; a prophet, to be wisdom, and a teacher and counsellor in all cases to man; so they do not receive Christ, especially in the first and third office. But where true justi-

fying faith is, a man closeth with whole Christ in all his offices, judging all his "will good, holy, just, and spiritual," Rom. vii. 12. 14. and "right concerning all things," Psal. cxix. 128. "making mention of this righteousness only," Psal. lxxi. 16.

The man also giveth up himself to be taught of him; Matth. xi. 29. "Learn of me." So that "Christ is made," to the true believer, with his own consent, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. And although he hath not all these things formally in exercise when his heart goeth out after Christ, yet, upon search and trial, it will be found with him, as I have said.

3dly. Hypocrites and reprobates do never close with Christ, and all the inconveniences that may follow him; they stick at that with the Scribe, Matth. viii. 19, 20.: but where true justifying faith is, a man doth close with him on all hazards; he resolveth to forego all rather than to forego Christ. "We have left all, and have followed thee," Mark x. 28.; "he reckoneth all to be loss and dung for the excellency of Christ Jesus, as his Lord, and to be found in him, Phillip. iii. 8.

We might give other differences also; as that true faith is operative, "purifying the heart," Acts xv. 9. "working by love," Gal. v. 6. whilst "hypocrites do only cleanse the outside of the platter," Matth. xxiii. 25. and "do all to be seen of men," Matth. vi. 5. not seeking the honour that is of God only, and so cannot believe," John v. 44. We might also shew that true faith is never alone in a man, but attended with

other saving graces. But because these things will coincide with what followeth, and here we are shewing that a man may take up his gracious state by his faith, and the acting thereof on Christ, we pass these things.

CHAP. V.

Of the New Creature.

THE second great mark of a gracious state, and true saving interest in Jesus Christ, is the new creature; 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." This new creation, or renovation, of that man, is a very sensible change; although not in those who are effectually called from the womb, or in their younger years (because those have had this new creature from that time in them, so as this change in after periods of time is not discernible,) yet in those who have been regenerated and brought in to Christ after they were come to greater age, and so have more palpably been under the "power of darkness," before they were "translated into the kingdom of Christ," Col. i. 13. But in all who do warrantably pretend to Christ, this new creature must be; although some do not know experimentally the contraries of every part of it so as others do; because they have not been equally in regard of practice under the power of darkness. This new creature is called the new man, Col. iii. 10. which doth hold out the extent of it. It is not simply a new tongue, or new hand, but a new man. There is a principle of new life and motion put in the man, which is the new heart; which new principle of life sen-

deth forth acts of life, or of "conformity to the image of him who created it," Col. iii. 10. so as the party is renewed in some measure every way. This renovation of the man who is in Christ may be reduced into these two great heads.

First, There is a renovation of the man's person, soul and body, in some measure.

1st, His understanding is renewed, so as he judgeth "Christ preached," in the gospel to be "the wisdom and power of God," a wise and strong device beseeming God, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. He knoweth the things of God really and solidly, not to be yea and nay, and uncertain fancies; but all to be yea and amen, solid, certain substantial things, having a desirable accomplishment in Christ, and resolving much in him; 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned: but he that is spiritual, judgeth all things." 2 Cor. i. 18, 19, 20. "As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." Natural men, educated under gospel ordinances, although they have some notional knowledge of God, Christ, the promises, the motions of the Holy Spirit, &c. so as they may confer, preach, and dispute of these things; yet they look on

them as common received maxims of christianity, from which to recede were a singularity and disgrace: but not as real, solid, substantial truths, so as to adventure their souls and everlasting being on them. The understanding is renewed also, to take up somewhat of God in the creatures, as bearing sparks of his glorious attributes; Psal. xix. 1. they see "the heavens declaring his glory and power;" and somewhat of God in providence, and dispensations that fall out: "His wondrous works declare that his name is near," Psal. lxxv. 1. The understanding also taketh up the conditions and cases of the soul otherwise than it was wont to do; as we find the saints usually speaking in scripture, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord," Psal. xvi. 2. "My soul said, thy face will I seek," Psal. xxvii. 8. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul," Psal. xlii. 5. and xliii. 5. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul," Psal. cxvi. 7.

2dly, The heart and affections are renewed. The heart is made "a new heart, a heart of flesh," capable of impressions, having a copy of his law stamped on it, and the fear of God put into it, whereby the man's duty becometh in a manner native and kindly to the man, Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Ezek. xxxvi. 26. It was before a heart of stone void of the fear of God. The affections are renewed now: the love is renewed in some good measure; it goeth out after God; "I will love the Lord," Psal. xviii. 1.; after his law, "O how love I thy law!" Psal. cxix. 97.; after those who have God's image in them, John xiii. 35. "By this shall all men know that ye are my

disciples, if ye have love one to another." John iii. 14. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." This love to God's people is upon a pure account, as they are the children of God, and do keep his statutes; 1 Peter i. 22. it is "with a pure heart fervently;" and therefore it goeth towards all such whom the man knoweth or apprehendeth to be such; Psal. cxiv. 63. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," in all cases and conditions, even where there is nothing to beautify or commend but the image of God. And this love is so fervent many times, 1 Peter i. 22. that it putteth itself out in all relations, so as a man seeketh a godly wife, a godly master, a godly servant, a godly counsellor, if he have to choose any, Psal. ci. 6. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me." And "it is not quenched by many waters," Cant. viii. 7. Many imperfections and infirmities, difference in opinion, wrongs received, will not altogether quench love. Also it is communicative of good according to its measure, and as the case of the poor godly requireth; Psal. xvi. 2. "Thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints," &c. 1 John iii. 17, 18, 19. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of truth, and shall

assure our hearts before him." The man's hatred is also renewed, and is now bended against sin; Psal. cxix. 113. "I hate vain thoughts;" against God's enemies, as such, Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22. "Do not I hate them that hate thee?" &c. The joy or delight is renewed, for it runneth towards God; Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee:" towards his law and will; Psal. i. 2. "His delight is in the law of the Lord:" and towards the godly and their fellowship; Psal. xvi. 3. "To the saints, in whom is all my delight." The sorrow is turned against sin which hath wronged Christ; Zech. xii. 10. "Looking to him whom they have pierced, they mourn." 2 Cor. vii. 11. "The sorrow is godly" there and against what encroacheth upon God's honour. "They are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and the reproach of that is their burden," Zeph. iii. 18. There is some renovation in all the affections, as in every other part of the soul pointing now towards God.

3dly. The very outward members of the man are renewed, as the scripture speaks, the tongue, the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, &c.; so that those "members which once were improved as weapons of unrighteousness unto sin, are now improved as weapons of righteousness unto holiness," Rom. vi. 19.

Secondly. A man who is in Christ is renewed in some measure in all his ways: "Behold, all things are become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. The man becometh new, 1st, In the way of his inter-

est. He was upon any good before, though but apparent, and at best but external; Psal. iv. 6. "Many say, who will shew us any good?" but now his interest and business is, how to "be found in Christ," in that day, Philip. iii. 9. or how to be forth-coming to him, and "walk before him in the light of the living," Psal. lvi. 13. which he would choose among all the mercies that fill this earth; Psal. cxix. 64. "The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy, teach me thy statutes." The interest of Christ also becometh the man's interest, as appeareth in the song of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. and in the song of Mary, Luke i. It is strange to see people newly converted, and having reached but the beginnings of knowledge, concern and interest themselves in the public matters of Christ's kingdom, so desirous to have him riding prosperously, and subduing the people under him.

2dly. The man that is in Christ, is renewed in the way of his worship. He was wont to "serve God in the oldness of the letter," for the fashion, answering the letter of the command in the outside of duty, which one in whom the old man hath absolute dominion can do; but now he worshippeth God in newness of spirit, Rom. vii. 6. in a new way, wherein he is "helped by the spirit of God," Rom. viii. 26. beyond the reach of flesh and blood. He serveth now the true and living God," 1 Thess. 1. 9. "in spirit and in truth," John iv. 24. Having spiritual apprehensions of God, and engaged in his very soul in that work, doing and saying truly, and not feignedly when he worshippeth; still

"desiring to approach unto him as a living God," who heareth and seeth him and can accept his service, Psal. xlii. 1, 2. I grant he fails of this many times; yet I may say, such worship he intendeth, and sometimes overtaketh, and doth not much reckon that worship which is not so performed unto God; and the iniquity of his holy things is not the least part of his burden and exercise. Such a worship natural men are strangers unto, whilst they babble out their vain glorious boastings, like the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, 12, "to an unknown God," Acts xviii. 23.

3dly. The man that is in Christ is renewed in the way of his outward calling and employment in the world; he now resolveth to be about it, because God hath commanded so; "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," Rom. xii. 11.; and to eye God in it as the last end, "doing it to his glory," 1 Cor. x. 31. and studieth to keep some intercourse with God in the exercise of his outward employments, as Jacob doth in his latter will. Gen. xlix. 18. I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;" and as Nehemiah did, Neh. ii. 4. "Then the king said unto me, for what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven;" so as the man resolveth to walk with God, and "set him always before him," Psal. xvi. 8. wherein I deny not he faileth often.

4thly. He becometh new in the way of his relations; he becometh a more dutiful husband, father, brother, master, servant, neighbour, &c. "Herein doth he exercise himself to keep a conscience void of offence towards men as well as

towards God," Acts xxiv. 16. "becoming all things to all men," 1 Cor. ix. 22.

5thly. He becometh new in the way of lawful liberties; he studieth to make use of meat, drink, sleep, recreations, apparel, with an eye to God, labouring not to come under the power of any lawful thing, 1 Cor. vi. 12. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any;" nor to give offence to others in the use of these things, Rom. xiv. 20, 21. "For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Rom. xv. 2. "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification; not using liberty as an occasion to the flesh," Gal. v. 13. Yea, he laboureth to use all these things as a stranger on earth, so as his moderation may appear, Philip. iv. 5. "Let your moderation be known unto all men." And some way he doth eye God as the last end in these things; 1 Cor. x. 31. "doing all to the glory of God:" so as we may say of that man, "Old things are much passed away, all things are," in some measure, "become new," 2 Cor. v. 17. He that is so a new creature, is undoubtedly in Christ.

This renovation of a man in all manner of conversation, and this being under law to God in all things, is that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14. Men may fancy things to themselves, but unless they study

to approve themselves unto God in all well-pleasing, and reach some inward testimony of sincerity that way, they shall not assure their hearts before him. "The testimony of men's conscience is their rejoicing," 2 Cor. i. 12. "By this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments," 1 John ii. 3. "and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God," 1 John iii. 19, 20, 21. No confidence if the heart condemn. This is the new creature, having a principle of new spiritual live infused by God into the heart, whereby it becometh new, and putteth forth acts of new life throughout the whole man, as we have said, so as he pointeth towards the whole law. Towards these commands which forbid sin; so he resolveth to set against secret sins, "not to lay a stumbling block before the blind," Lev. xix. 14. little sins, which are judged so by many, the least things of the law, Matth. v. 19. "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:" spiritual sins, filthiness of the spirit; 2 Cor. vii. 1. "Having therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Sins of omission as well as of commission, since men are to be judged by these, Matth. xxv. 41—45. "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart

from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink," &c. Yea, sins that are inbred into his natural humour and constitution, and so are as "a right eye or hand" to him; Matth. 5. 29. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, &c. This new principle of life, by the good hand of God, maketh the man set against every known sin so far as not to allow peaceable abode to any known darkness; 2 Cor. vi. 14. What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" 2. As also he pointeth towards those commands which relate to duty, and the quickening of grace in man: it maketh a man "respect all God's known commands," Psal. cxix. 6.; to live godly, righteously, and soberly," Titus ii. 12. yea, and to study a right and sincere way and manner of doing things, resolving not to give over this study of conformity to God's will, whilst he liveth on earth, but still to "press forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Philip. iii. 13, 14. This is true holiness, very becoming all those who pretend to be heirs of that holy habitation, in the immediate company and fellowship of a holy God: 1 John iii. 3. "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him."

Some may think these things high attainments, and very hard to be attained: I grant it is true. But first, remember that there is a very large allowance in the covenant, promised to his peo-

ple, which maketh things more easy. The Lord hath engaged, to take away the stony heart, to give a heart of flesh, a new heart, a heart to fear him forever; he hath engaged to "put his law in men's hearts; to put his fear in their hearts, to make them to keep that law; to put his spirit in them, to cause them to keep it." He hath promised "to satisfy the priests with fatness," that the souls of the people may be satiated with his goodness; and to keep and water them continually every moment," Ezek. xxxvi. 26. Jer. xxxii. 39. 40. Jer. xxxi. 33. Ez. xxxvi. 27. Jer. xxxi. 14. Jer. xxxi. 12. Isaiah xxvii. 3. And if he must be "inquired to do all these things unto men," Ezek. xxxvi. 37. he engageth to pour out the spirit of grace and supplication on them," Zech. xii. 10.; and so to learn them how to seek these things, and how to put him to it, to do all for them.

Secondly. For the satisfaction of the weaker, I grant this new creature, as we have circumscribed and enlarged it, will not be found, in all the degrees of it, in every gracious person. But it is well if,

1st. There be a new man. We cannot grant less; "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature," 2 Cor. v. 17.; and that is the new man, which all must put on who are savingly taught of Christ; Eph. iv. 21. 24. "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts: and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is

created in righteousness and true holiness." There must be some renewing after the image of God in a man's soul and body: there must be somewhat of every part of the man pointing towards God. Although I grant every one cannot instruct this to others, neither discern it in himself, because many know not the distinct parts of the soul, nor pieces of reformation competent to every part of the soul and body; yet it will be found there is some such thing in them, yea, they have a witness of it within them, if you make the thing plain and clear to them what it is.

2dly. There must be such a respect unto God's known commands, that a man do not allow peaceably any known iniquity to dwell in him; for "what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16. He must not regard iniquity; Psal. cxix. 6. "Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Psal. lxvi. 18. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." I grant men may be ignorant of many commands and many sins, and may imagine, in some cases, that some sins are not hateful unto God: but supposing that they are instructed in these things, there can be no agreement between righteousness and unrighteousness.

3dly. Men must point towards all the law of God in their honest resolutions; for this is nothing else than to give up the heart unto God, to put his law in it without exception, which is a part of the covenant we are to make with God; Heb. viii. 10. "This is the covenant that I

will make with the house of Israel—I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." I grant many know not how to point towards God's law in all their ways, but if it be made manifest unto them how that should be done, they will point at it. And it is true, they will many times fail of their resolutions in their practice; yet when they have failed, they can say, they did resolve otherwise, and will yet honestly, and without guile, resolve to do otherwise, and it will prove their affliction to have failed of their resolution, when the Lord discovereth it to them, which he will do in due time.

4thly. When we are to judge of our state by the new creature, we must do it at a convenient time, when we are in good case, at least, not when we are in the worst case; for the flesh and spirit do lust and fight against each other, Gal. v. 17.; and sometimes the one and sometimes the other doth prevail. Now I say, we must choose a convenient time, when the spiritual part is not by some temptation worsted and overpowered by the flesh; for in that case the new creature is recoiled back in its streams, and much returned to the fountain and the habits, except in some small things not easily discernible, whereby it maketh opposition to the flesh, according to the foresaid scripture. For, now is it the time of winter in the soul, and we may not expect fruit, yea, not leaves, as in some other season; only here, lest profane atheists should make advantage of this, we will say that the spirit doth often prevail over the flesh in a godly man, and yet the scope, aim, tenor, and main drift of his way is in the law of the Lord that is his walk, Psal.

cxix. 1.; whereas the path way and ordinary course of the wicked is sin, as is often hinted in the book of the Proverbs of Solomon. And if it happen that a godly man be overmastered by any transgression, ordinarily it is his sad exercise: and we suppose he keeps it still in dependency before God to have it rectified, as David speaketh, Psal. lvi. 13. "Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?"

CHAP. VI.

The difference betwixt a truly renewed man who is in Christ and Hypocrites.

OBJECT. Atheists and hypocrites may have great changes and renovation wrought upon them, and in them, and I fear mine be such.

ANSW. I grant that atheists and hypocrites have many things in them which do look like the new creature.

First. In regard of the parts of the man, they may, 1. Come to much knowledge, as Heb. vi. 4. "They are enlightened." 2. There may be a motion among their affections, as "They receive the word with joy, as he that received the seed into stony places." Matth. xiii. 20. 3. They may reach a great deal of outward reformation in the outward man, both concerning freedom from sin, and engagement to positive duty, as that Pharisee did, Luke xviii. 11, 12. "God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican: I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Yea, 4. In regard of their practical understanding, they may judge some things of God to be excellent; the officers said, that "never man spake as Christ," John vii. 46.

Secondly. Hypocrites may have a great deal of profession. 1. They may talk of the law and gospel, and of the covenant, as the wicked do; Psal. l. 16. "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" 2. They may confess sin openly to their own shame, as King Saul did, 1 Sam. xxvi. 21. 3. They may humble themselves in sackcloth with Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 27. 4. They may inquire busily after duty, and come cheerfully to receive it; Isaiah lviii. 2. "Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God; they ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God." 5. They may join with God's interest in a hard and difficult time, as Demas and other hypocrites, in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, who afterwards fell off. 6. They may give much of their goods to God and to the saints, as Ananias, Acts v. 1, 2. if not all their goods; 1 Cor. xiii. 3. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Yea, 7. It is not impossible for some such, being straitly engaged in their credit, to "give their bodies to be burned," as in the last cited place.

Thirdly. Hypocrites may advance far in the common and ordinary steps of a christian work; such as the elect have when God leads them captive. As, 1. They may be under great convictions of sin, as Judas was, Matth. xxvii. 3, 4, 5. So was King Saul often. 2. They may tremble

at the word of God, and be under much terror, as Felix was, Acts xxiv. 25. 3. They may rejoice in receiving of the truth, as he that receiveth the seed into stony places," Matth. xiii. 20. 4. They may be in some peace and quiet, in expectation of salvation by Christ, as the foolish virgins were, Matth. xxv. 5. All this may be backed and followed with some good measure of reformation, as the Pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, 12. " The unclean spirit may go out of them," Matth, xii. 43. 6. This work may seem to be confirmed by some special experiences and " tastings of the good word of God," Heb. vi. 4, 5.

Fourthly. Hypocrites may have some things very like the saving graces of the spirit; as, 1. They may have a sort of faith with Simon Magus, Acts viii. 13. 2. They may have a sort of repentance, and walk mournfully; Mal. iii. 14. " What profit is it that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" 3. They may have a great fear of God, such as Balaam had, who, for a house-full of gold, would not go with the Messengers of Balak, without leave asked of God, and given, Numb. xxii. 18. 4. They have a sort of hope; Job viii. 13. " The hypocrite's hope shall perish." 5. They have some love, so had Herod to John, Mark vi. 26. I need not to insist, it is out of all question they have counterfeits of all saving graces.

Fifthly. They have somewhat like the special communications of God, and the witnessing of his spirit, and somewhat like " the powers of the world to come" powerfully on them, with some flashes of joy arising thence, as Heb. vi. 4, 5.

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." Notwithstanding of all which, they are but "almost persuaded, with Agrippa, to be christians," Acts xxvi. 28. It were tedious to speak particularly to each of these things, and to clear it up, that they are all but rotten ware: I shall condescend upon some few things, wherein a truly renewed man, who is in Christ, doth differ from hypocrites and reprobates.

1st. Whatsoever change be in hypocrites, yet their heart is not changed and made new. The new heart is only given to (the saints when they are converted) and brought under the bond of the covenant; Jer. xxxii. 39. "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever." Ezek. xxxvi. 26. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Hypocrites did never apprehend Christ as the only satisfying good in all the world, for which with joy they would quit all; for then the kingdom of God were entered into them; Matth. xiii. 44. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." The truly renewed man dare, and can upon good ground say, and hath a testimo-

ny of it from on high, that his heart hath been changed in taking up of Christ, and hath been led out after him, as the only enriching treasure, in whom " to be found he accounteth all things else loss and dung," Philip. iii. 8, 9.

2dly. Whatsoever reformation or profession hypocrites do attain unto, as it cometh not from a new heart, and pure principle of zeal for God, so it is always for some wicked intention, so as " to be seen of men." Matth. vi. 5. or to evade and shun some outward strait, to be free of God's wrath, and the trouble of their own conscience; Isaiah lviii. 3. " Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" Mal. iii. 14. " What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" In testimony of this, they never have respect to all known commands, else they should " never be ashamed," Psal. cxix. 6.; nor do they, without approved guile in their own heart, resolve against every known iniquity, else they were freed of heart condemnings, and so might justly have " confidence before God," 1 John ii. 21, 22. If in ever so mean a case they did, from a principle of love unto, and of zeal for Christ, and for a right end, confess and profess him, Christ were obliged by his own word " to confess them before his Father, Matth. x. 32.

3dly. Whatsoever length hypocrites advance in that work, by which people are led in unto Christ, yet they never " seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," Matth. vi. 33. " The one thing that is necessary," viz. Christ's

friendship and fellowship, is never their one thing and heart-satisfying choice, else that "better part would never be taken from them," Luke x. 42.

4thly. Whatsoever counterfeits of grace are in hypocrites, yet they are all bred there, without any saving work of the spirit of Christ; and it is enough to exclude them from the benefit of this mark that they are never denied to these things, nor emptied of them, but still do rest on them as their Saviour, so that "they submit not unto the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3.; and that is enough to keep them at a distance from Christ, who will never cover that old garment of hypocrites with his fine new linen, nor "put his new wine in these old bottles, Matth. ix. 16, 17.

5thly. We may say, let hypocrites, reprobates, or Atheists, have what they can, they want the three great essentials of religion and true christianity. (1.) They are not broken in themselves, and emptied even of their righteousness, the length of self floating, yet lying open for relief. Such "lost ones Christ came to seek and save." Luke xix. 10. (2.) They never took up Christ Jesus as the only treasure and jewel that can only enrich, and should satisfy; and therefore have never cordially agreed unto God's device in the covenant, and so are not worthy of him, neither hath the kingdom of God savingly entered into their heart: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field," Matth. xiii. 44. (3.) They never in

earnest do close with Christ's whole yoke without exception, judging all his "will just and good, holy and spiritual," as Rom. vii. 12.; and therefore no rest followed on them by Christ; Matth. xi. 29. "Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Therefore whosoever thou art, who can lay clear and just claim to these three foresaid things, thou art beyond the reach of all atheists, hypocrites, and reprobates, in the world, as having answered the great ends and intents of the law and gospel.

OBJECT. I am clear sometimes, I think, to lay claim to that mark of the new creature; yet at other times sin doth so prevail over me, that I am made to question all the work within me.

ANSW. It is much to be lamented, that people professing his name, should be so abused and enslaved by transgression as many are. Yet, in answer to the objection, if it be seriously proposed, we say the saints are found in scripture justly laying claim unto God and his covenant, when iniquity did prevail over them; as we find, Psal. lxv. 3. Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away." Rom. vii. 23. 25. Paul "thanks God through Christ, when a law in his members leads him captive unto sin." But for the better understanding, and safe application, of such truths, we must make a difference betwixt gross outbreakings and ordinary infirmities or heart-ills, or sins that come unawares upon a man, without forethought or any deliberation. As for the former sort, it is hard for a man whilst he is under the power of them, to see his gracious change, although it be in him; and very hard to draw

any comfort from it, until the man be in some measure recovered, and begin seriously to resent such sins, and resolve against them. We find David calling himself God's servant, quickly after his numbering of God's people; but he was then under the serious resentment of his sin, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. Jonah layeth claim to God as his master under his rebellion; but he is then rueing it, and in a spirit of revenge against himself for his sin, Jonah i. 9, 10. 12. Next, as for these sins of infirmity, and daily incursion and heart-ills, such as those were, whereof Paul doth complain.

We shall draw something from that seventh chapter to the Romans whereupon Paul maintains his interest in Christ, and if you can apply them, it is well. 1. When Paul findeth that he doth much fail and cannot reach conformity to God's law, he doth not blame the law, as being too strict, so as men cannot keep it, as hypocrites use to speak; but he doth blame himself as being carnal; and he saith of the law, "that it is good, holy, and spiritual, Rom. vii. 12. 14. 2. He can say, he failed of a good which he intended, and did outshoot himself, and he had often honestly resolved against the evil which he fell into, Rom. vii. 15. 18, 19. 3. He saith, that the prevailing of sin over him in his exercise, so as he judgeth himself wretched because of such a body of death from which he longeth to be delivered, Rom. vii. 24. 4. He saith, that whilst he is under the power and law of sin, there is somewhat in the bottom of his heart opposing it, although overmastered by it, which would be anoth-

er way, and when that gets the upper hand it is a delightsome thing, Rom. vii. 22—25. Upon these things he "thanks God in Christ that there is no condemnation," Rom. vii. 25. and viii. 1. Now then look if you can lay claim to these things. 1. If you do blame yourself and approve the law, whilst you fail. 2. If you can say, that you do often resolve against sin honestly, and without known guile; and do so resolve the contrary good before the evil break in upon you. 3. If you can say, that you are so far exercised with your failings as to judge yourself wretched because of such things, and a body of death, which is the root and fountain of such things. 4. If you can say that there is a party within you opposing these evils, which would be at the right way, and as it were, is in its element when it is in God's way, it is well; only be advised not to take rest, until in some good measure you be rid of the ground of this objection, or, at least, until you can very clearly say, you are waging war with these things. Now, a good help against the prevailing power of sin is to cleave close to Christ Jesus by faith, which, as it is a desirable part of sanctification, and a notable piece of conformity to God's will, and most subservient unto his design in the gospel, Gal. ii. 20, 21. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God:" and so should be much endeavoured by people as a work pleasing unto God, John vi. 29. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent:" so it is the ready way to draw life and

sap from Christ the blessed root, for fruitfulness in all cases, as John xv. 4, 5. Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

CHAP. VII.

Of the special communications of God, and the singular gracious operations of his Spirit.

OBJECT. I do not partake of these special communications of God mentioned in the scripture, and actings and outgoings of his spirit, whereof gracious people often are speaking, and whereunto they attain. The want of these things maketh me much suspect my state.

ANSW. I shall shortly hint some of these excellent communications; and I hope, upon a right discovery of them, there will be but small ground found for the jealous complaints of many gracious people. First. (Beside these convictions of the spirit of God, which use to usher Christ's way into the souls of men, and these also which afterwards do ordinarily attend them,) there is a seal of the spirit of God spoken of in scripture, the principal thing whereof is the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, imprinting the draughts and lineaments of God's image and revealed will upon a man, as a seal or signet doth leave an impression and stamp of its likeness upon the thing sealed. So it is, 2 Tim. ii. 19. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having

this seal; the Lord knoweth them that are his; and, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." And thus I conceive the seal to be called a witness, 1 John v. 10. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself;" that is, the grounds upon which an interest in Christ is to be made out and proved, are in every believer; for he hath somewhat of the sanctifying work of God's spirit in him, which is a sure, although not always a clear and manifest witness.

Secondly. There is communion with God much talked of among christians, whereby they understand the sensible presence of God refreshing the soul exceedingly. But if we speak properly, communion with God is a mutual interest between God and a man, who hath closed with him in Christ. It is a commonness, or a common interest between God and a man; not only is a man interested in God himself, but in all that is all the Lord's: so the Lord hath a special interest in the man, and also all that belongs to him. There is a communion between husband and wife, whereby they have a special interest in each others persons, goods, and concernments; so is it here: there is such communion with God, he is our God, and all things are ours, because he is ours. This communion with God all true believers have at all times, we shall shew afterwards. I grant there is an actual improvement of that communion, whereby men do boldly meddle with any thing that belongs unto God, and do meddle with himself, as their own, with much homeliness and familiarity: especially in worship, when the soul doth converse with a liv-

ing God, partaking of the divine nature, growing like unto him, and sweetly travelling through his attributes, and, with some confidence of interest, viewing these things as the man's own goods: this we call communion with God in ordinances. This indeed is not so ordinarily nor frequently made out to men, and all his people do not equally partake of it; and it is true, that what is in God, goeth not out for the behoof of the man to his apprehension, equally at all times; yet certainly, communion with God, properly so called, viz. that commonness of interest between God and a man, who is savingly in covenant with him, doth always stand firm and sure; and so much of communion with God in ordinances have all believers as that their heart converseth with a living God there, now and then, and is in some measure changed into that same image; and there needeth be no doubt about any further in it.

Thirdly. There is a thing which is called fellowship with God, often mistaken also amongst believers. If by fellowship be meant the walking in our duty, as in the sight of a living God who seeth and heareth us, and is witness to all our carriage, it is a thing common unto all gracious men; they all have it habitually, and in design, Psal. xvi. 8. "I have set the Lord always before me." Yea, and often they have it actually in exercise, when their spirit is in any good frame; they walk as if they saw God standing by them, and have some thoughts of his favour through Christ: "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3. If we by fellowship do mean

a sweet, refreshing, familiar, sensible conversing with God, which doth delight and refresh the soul, beside what the conscience of duty doth; it is then a walking in the light of his countenance, and a good part of sensible presence: and although it seemeth Enoch had much of it, whilst it is said, "He walked with God," Gen. v. 24. yet it is not so ordinary as the former, nor so common to all christians; for here the soul is filled as with marrow and fatness, following hard after its guide, and singularly upheld by his right hand, Psal. lxiii. 5. 8. "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips. My soul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me."

Fourthly. There is a thing which is called access unto God: and this I take to be the removing of obstructions out of the way between a man and God, so as the man is admitted to come near. We are said to have access to a great person when doors are cast open, guards removed from about him, and we admitted to come close to him; so it is here. Now this access, in scripture, is sometimes taken for Christ's preparing of the way, the removing of enmity between God and sinners, so as men now have a patent way to come unto God through Christ; Eph. ii. 18. "For through him we both have an access by one spirit unto the Father." Sometimes it is taken for the actual improvement of that access purchased by Christ, when a man finds all obstructions and differences, which do ordinarily fall in between him and God, removed: God is not uncouth to him, nor as a stranger;

keeping up himself from him, or frowning on him; but the man is admitted to "come even to his seat," as Job xxiii. 3. Of the want of this doth Job complain, chap. xxiii. 8, 9. whilst he saith, "I go forward, backward, to the right and left hand, and I find him not." The first sort of access is common to all believers: they are brought near by the blood of the covenant, and are no more far off, as the deadly enmity between God and them is removed: but access in the other sense is dispensed more according to the Lord's absolute sovereignty and pleasure, and it is left in the power of believers to obstruct it unto themselves, until it please the Lord mercifully and freely to grant it unto them again; so it is up and down, and there needs be no question as to a man's state about it.

Fifthly. There is a thing called liberty before God; and this properly is freedom, or free speaking unto God. Many do much question their state, because of the want of this now and then, since the scripture hath said, "Where the spirit is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17.; but they do unjustly confine that liberty spoken of there unto this free speaking before God. I grant, where the spirit of the Lord doth savingly discover God's will in the scriptures to a man, there is liberty from any obligation to the ceremonial law, and from the condemning power of the moral law, and from much of that gross darkness and ignorance which is on natural hearts as a veil, hiding Christ in the gospel from them. I grant also, that sometimes even this liberty, which is a free communing with God, and "ordering of our cause before him, and filling of

our mouth with arguments," Job xxiii. 4. is granted to the godly, but not as liberty taken in the former senses. Although the Lord hath obliged himself to " pour out the spirit of prayer upon all the house of David" in some measure, Zech. xii. 10. yet this communication of the spirit, which we call liberty or free speaking unto God, dependeth much on the Lord's absolute pleasure, when, and in what measure to allow it. This liberty, which we call freedom or free speaking with God in prayer, is sometimes much abstracted from any great confidence in the time of prayer, at least, until it draw towards the close of it; it standeth much in a vivacity of the understanding to take up the case which a man is to speak before God, so as he can order his cause: and next, there be words, or verbal expressions, elegant, suitable, and very emphatical, or powerful and pithy. There is also joined a fervency of spirit in prayer, whereof the scripture speaketh; the soul is hot and bended, and very intent. There is also ordinarily in this liberty a special melting of the heart often joined with a great measure of the " spirit of grace and supplication," Zech. xii. 10. So the soul is poured out before God as for a first born. Such is the liberty which many saints get before God, whilst, in much brokenness of heart and fervency of spirit, they are admitted to speak their mind fully to God, as a living God, noticing (at least) their prayer. Sometimes this liberty is joined with confidence, and then it is not only a free, but also a bold speaking before God. It is that " boldness with con-

fidence," Eph. iii. 12. "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of him." This is more rarely imparted unto men than the former, yet it is ordinary: it hath in it, beside what we spake before, some influence of the spirit upon faith, making it put out some vigorous acting in prayer. There is a sweet mournful frame of spirit, by which a man poureth out his heart in God's bosom, and, with some confidence of his favour and good will, pleadeth his cause before him as a living God; and this is all the sensible presence that many saints do attain unto. There is no ground of doubt concerning a man's state in the point of liberty before God, in this last sense, because there is nothing essential to the making up of a gracious state here: some have it, some want it, some have it at sometimes, and not at other times, so that it is much up and down; yet I may say, gracious men may do much, by a very ordinary influence, contributing towards the attaining and retaining, or keeping of such a frame of spirit.

Sixthly. There is a thing called influence, or breathing of the spirit. This gracious influence (for of such only do I now speak) is either ordinary; and this is the operations of the holy spirit on the soul, and the habits of grace there, whereby they are still kept alive, and in some exercise and acting although not very discernible. This influence, I conceive, doth always attend believers, and is that "keeping and watering night and day, and every moment," promised, Isaiah xxvii. 3.; or, this influence is more

singular and special, and is the same to a gracious, although a withered soul, as the "wind and breath to the dry bones," putting them in good case, Ezek. xxxvii. 9, 10. and "as the dew or rain to the grass," or newly mown field or parched ground, Psal. lxxii. 6. Such influence is meant, Cant. iv. 16. by the "blowing of the south wind, making the spices to flow out." When the spirit moveth thus, there is an edge put upon the graces of God in the soul, and they are made to act more vigorously. This is the "enlarging of the heart," by which a man doth run in the ways of God," Psal. cxix. 32. This influence is more discernible than the former, and not so ordinarily communicated. Also here, sometimes the wind bloweth more upon one grace, and sometimes more discernible upon another, and often upon many of the graces together; and according to the less or greater measure of this influence, the soul acteth more or less vigorously towards God: and since faith is a created grace in the soul, this influence of the spirit is upon it, sometimes less, sometimes more, and accordingly is the assurance of faith small or great.

Seventhly. There is the hearing of prayer, often spoken of in scripture; and many vex themselves about it, alledging that they know nothing of it experimentally. I grant, there is a favourable hearing of prayer; but we must remember it is two-fold. Either (1.) It is such as a man is simply to believe by way of argument on scriptural grounds: as if I be fled unto Christ, and do approach unto God in him, pray according to his will, not regarding iniquity in my

heart, exercising faith about the thing I pray for absolutely or conditionally, according to the nature of the thing and promises about it; I am obliged to believe that God heareth my prayer, and will give what is good, according to these scriptures, John xiv. 13, 14. "Whatsoever ye ask in my name, I will do it." 1 John v. 14. "This is our confidence, that whatsoever we ask according to his will, he heareth us." Mark xi. 24. "Believe that ye receive, and ye shall have what ye desire." Psal. lxvi. 18. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear: then, if I regard not iniquity, I may believe that he doth hear me. Or, (2.) A man doth sensibly perceive that God heareth his prayer; it is made out to his heart, without any syllogistical deduction. Such a hearing of prayer got Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18. "Her countenance was no more sad." Surely the Lord did breathe upon her faith, and made her believe that she was heard: she could not make it out by any argument; for she had not grounds whereupon to build the premises of the argument, according to scripture, in that particular: God did stamp it some way upon her heart sensibly, and so made her believe it. This is but rarely granted, especially in cases clearly deducible in scripture; therefore people are much to be satisfied in exercising their faith about the other, and ought to leave it to God to give of this latter what he pleaseth. A man's gracious state should not be brought upon debate upon the account of such hearing of prayer.

Eighthly. There is assurance of God's favour by the witnessing of our own spirits; which assurance is deduced by way of argument syl-

logistically: thus, whosoever believeth on Christ shall never perish: but I do believe on Christ; therefore I shall never perish. Whoso hath respect unto all God's commandments shall never be ashamed: but I have respect unto all his commands; therefore, I shall never be ashamed. I say, by reasoning thus, and comparing spiritual things, a man may attain unto a good certainty of his gracious state. It is supposed, 1 John iii. 18, 19. "That by loving the brethren in deed and in truth, we may assure our hearts before God, and that a man may rejoice upon the testimony of a good conscience," 2 Cor. i. 12. "A man may have confidence towards God, if his heart do not condemn him," 1 John iii. 21. We may then attain unto some assurance, although not full assurance, by the witness of our own spirits. I do not deny, that in his witnessing of our spirits towards assurance, there is some concurrence of the spirit of God: but I conceive, there needeth but a very ordinary influence, without which we can do nothing. Now, this assurance, such as it is, may be reached by intelligent believers, who keep a good conscience in their walk. So, I hope, there needs be no debate about it, as to a man's gracious state; for if a man will clear himself of heart condemnings, he will speedily reach this assurance.

Ninthly. There is a "witnessing of God's spirit" mentioned, Rom. viii. 16. "bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. This operation of the spirit is best understood, if we produce any syllogism by which our spirit doth witness our sonship; as, for ex-

ample, whosoever loveth the brethren is passed from death to life, and consequently is in Christ; but I love the brethren, therefore I am passed from death to life. Here there is a threefold operation of the spirit, or three operations rather: The first is a beam of divine light upon the first proposition, persuading the divine authority of it, as the word of God. The spirit of the Lord must witness the divinity of the scripture, and that it is the infallible word of God, far beyond all other arguments that can be used for it. The second operation is a glorious beam of light from the spirit, shining upon the second proposition, and so upon his own graces in the soul, discovering them to be true graces, and such as the scripture calleth so. Thus we are said to "know by his spirit the things that are freely given unto us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 13. The third operation is in order to the third proposition of the argument, or the conclusion, and this I conceive to be nothing else but an influence upon faith, strengthening it to draw a conclusion of full assurance upon the foresaid premises.

Now (with submission unto others, who have greater light in the scripture, and more experience of these precious communications,) I do conceive the witness of the spirit, or witnessing of it, which mentioned, Rom. viii. 16. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God," is not that first operation upon the first proposition; for that operation is that testimony of the spirit by which he beareth witness to the divinity of the whole scrip-

ture, and asserteth the divine authority of it unto the souls of gracious men; and such an operation may be upon a truth of scripture, which doth not relate to a man's sonship or interest in Christ at all. The spirit may so shine upon any truth relating to duty, or any other fundamental truth, persuading the divinity of it upon and unto the soul, and speak nothing relating to a man's interest in Christ. Neither is the third operation of the spirit, by which he makes faith boldly draw the conclusion, this witnessing of the spirit; for that operation is nothing else but an influence upon faith, bringing it out to full assurance: but that whereupon this full assurance is drawn or put out is somewhat deposed and witnessed already; therefore I conceive the second operation of the spirit upon the second proposition, and so upon the graces in the man, is that witness of God's spirit, that beam of divine light shining upon those graces, whereby they are made very conspicuous to the understanding. That is the witness, the shining so on them is his witnessing; for only here, in this proposition, and in this operation, doth the spirit of God prove a co-witness with our spirit: for the main thing wherein the witness of our spirit lieth is, in the second proposition, and so the spirit of God witnessing with our spirits is also in that same proposition. So these two witnesses having deposed and witnessed one and the same thing, viz. the truth and reality of such and such graces in the man, which our own spirit or conscience doth depose, according to its knowledge, and the spirit of the Lord doth certainly affirm and witness to be so; there is

a sentence drawn forth, and a conclusion of the man's sonship by the man's faith, breathed upon by the spirit for that effect: and this conclusion beareth the full assurance of a man's sonship. It may be presumed, that some true saints do not partake of this all their days, as Heb. ii. 15. "And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage."

Tenthly. I speak with the experience of many saints, and I hope, according to scripture, if I say there is a communication of the spirit of God which is let out to some of his people sometimes, that is somewhat beside, if not beyond, that witnessing of a sonship spoken of before. It is a glorious divine manifestation of God unto the soul, shedding abroad God's love in the heart: it is a thing better felt than spoken of: it is no audible voice, but it is a waft of glory filling the soul with God, as he is life, light, love, and liberty, countervailing that audible voice, "O man, greatly beloved," Dan. x. 19. putting a man in a transport with this on his heart, "it is good to be here," as Matth. xvii. 4. It is that which went out from Christ to Mary, when he but mentioned her name, John xx. 16. "Jesus said unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master." He had spoken some words to her before, and she understood not that it was he: but when he uttereth this one word, MARY, there was some admirable divine conveyance and manifestation made out unto her heart, by which she was so satisfyingly filled, that there was no place for arguing and disputing whether or no that was

Christ, and if she had any interest in him. That manifestation made faith to itself, and did purchase credit and trust to itself, and was equivalent with "thus saith the Lord." This is such a glance of glory that it may in the highest sense be called, "the earnest," or first fruits "of the inheritance," Eph. i. 14. for it is a felt armful of the holy God, almost wholly conforming the man unto his likeness, so swallowing him up, that he forgetteth all things except the present manifestation. O how glorious is this manifestation of the spirit! faith here riseth to so full an assurance, that it resolveth wholly into sensible embracements of God. This is the thing which doth best deserve the title of sensible presence, and its like is not given unto all believers, some whereof "are all their days under bondage and in fear," Heb. ii. 15.; but here, "love almost perfect, casteth out fear." 1 John iv. 18. This is so absolutely let out upon the Master's pleasure, and so transient and passing, or quickly gone, when it is, that no man may bring his gracious state upon debate for want of it.

Eleventhly. There is a thing we call peace, about which, many do vex themselves. This peace is either concerning a man's state, that he is reconciled unto God by Jesus Christ, or it is concerning his present case and condition, that he is walking so as approved of God, at least, so far as there is no quarrel or controversy between God and him threatening a stroke. Both of these are either such in the court of scripture, and consequently in God's account; or in the court of a man's own conscience. Peace con-

cerning a man's state, as being in Christ, is sure in the court of scripture and of heaven, when a man doth by faith close with Christ and the new covenant, Rom. v. 1. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." It being sure and solid in the court of scripture, it should hold sure in the court of a man's conscience, it being rightly informed; for in that case, it still speaks according to scripture: but because often the conscience is misinformed and in the dark, therefore there is often peace concerning a man's state according to scripture, whilst his conscience doth threaten the contrary, and doth still condemn, and refuseth to assail the man, as being reconciled unto God through Christ. In this case, the conscience must be informed, and the man's gracious state made out by the marks of grace, as we shewed before; and here the witness of my own spirit will do much to allay the cry of the conscience; and if the spirit of the Lord join his witness and testimony, the conscience is perfectly satisfied, and proclaimeth peace to the man.

The other peace concerning a man's present case or conditon, viz. that it is approved of God in a gospel sense, it may be wanting, and justly wanting, although the peace concerning a man's state be sure. This peace concerning a man's case and condition, is either such in the court of scripture; and this is when a man is not regarding iniquity, and respecting the commands of God without exception; then the scripture saith, he stands in an even place, and needeth fear no stated quarrel between God and him in order to a temporary stroke; and when it is thus, his

conscience should also assail him that same way, and would do so, if it were rightly informed; but because the conscience is often in the dark, therefore a man may be alarmed with evil in the court of conscience, as if he were justly to expect a stroke from God because of his sin, and some quarrel God hath at him, although he intend salvation for him. This is enough to keep a man in disquiet, and to inhibit him the rejoicing allowed unto him whilst he is walking in his integrity: therefore a man must here also inform his conscience, and receive no accusations nor condemnings from it, unless it make them clear by scripture. At that bar let every man stand, both concerning his state, and his condition or case; and let him appeal from all other courts to that, and not receive any indictment but confirm to the truth of God, by which the conscience is to proceed in all things. And if this were well looked unto, there would not be so many groundless suspicions amongst the Lord's people, either concerning their state or their condition upon every thought which entereth their mind.

Twelfthly. There is the joy of the Holy Ghost; and this is when the spirit doth breathe upon our rejoicing in God (which is a grace very little in exercise with many,) and maketh it set out sensibly and vigorously; and he exciteth and stirreth the passion of joy and of delight in the soul, so, as there is an unspeakable and glorious joy in the soul, in the apprehension of God's friendship and nearness unto him. 1 Peter i. 8. "In

whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This joy followeth upon peace, and peace followeth righteousness, Rom. xiv. 17. The kingdom of God is "righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. This joy readily will not fail to be according to the measure of the assurance of faith, as 1 Peter i. 8. "In whom believing, ye rejoice." So that the removal of mistakes about other things will allay doubts concerning this.

Now, because some of these excellent communications of the spirit, after they are gone, are brought in question as delusions of Satan, for vindication of them, we say, that the special operations of God's spirit in any high degree, usually are communicated to people after such brokeness of spirit, Psal. li. 8. "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice:" after so singular pains in religious duty; Dan. ix. 3. 21. "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. And whilst I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin—the man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me;" or in time of such suffering for righteousness, 1 Peter iv. 13, 14. "Rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye,

for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you;" or if they break in as the rain that waiteth not for man, then they do so humble and abase the person, Isaiah vi. 5. "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts:" and there are found so many evidences of grace in the man, Rom. viii. 16. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:" or these things do so provoke unto holiness and to have every thing answerable and conform unto these manifestations of God, 2 Tim. ii. 19. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The person under them doth so loathe all things beside God's friendship and fellowship, Matth. xvii. 4. "Peter said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here; and these things do carry on them, and with them, so much authority and divine superscription, whilst they are in the soul, that afterwards they may appear sufficiently to be special communications of God, and singular gracious operations of his spirit, and no delusions of "Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light," 2 Cor. xi. 14. nor such common flashes of the spirit as may admit afterwards irrecoverable apostacy from God, Hb. vi. 4, 5, 6. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."

Now then, to conclude this part of the work that relateth unto trial; I say to all these who complain of the want of the precious out-lettings or the spirit, 1st, Bless God if you want nothing essential for making out of a saving interest in Christ. God hath given unto you Christ Jesus, the greatest gift he had; and since your heart is shapen out for him, he will, with him, give you all things that are good for you in their season. 2dly, I do believe, upon a right search and trial, after you have understood the communications of the spirit, you are not so great a stranger to many things as you did suspect yourself to be. But, 3dly, remember the promises of life and of peace with God are no where in scripture made unto these special things whereof you alledge the want: the promises are made unto faith followed with holiness; and it may be presumed, that many heirs of glory do not in this life partake of some of these things, "but are in bondage all their days through fear of death," Heb. ii. 15. so that there should be no mistake about these things; we may seek after them, but God is free to give or withhold them. 4thly, Many do seek after such manifestation before they give credit by faith unto God's word. He hath borne record that there is life enough for men in Christ Jesus; and if men would by believing set to their seal that God is true, they should partake of more of these excellent things. 5thly, I may say, many have not honourable apprehensions and thoughts of the spirit of God, whose proper

work it is to put out the foresaid noble operations. They do not adore him as God, but vex, grieve, quench and resist him ; and many people, complaining of the want of these things, are not at the pains to seek the spirit in his outgoings, and few do set themselves apart for such precious receipts: therefore, be at more pains in religion, give more credit to his word, and esteem more highly the spirit of God, and so you may find more of these excellent things.

HOW TO

ATTAIN

UNTO A

SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST.

PART II.

HAVING, in the former part of this treatise, put every man's state to trial, it now remains that, in this following part, we give advice to those, who neither can nor dare lay claim to the marks formerly mentioned.

QUEST. II. *What shall they do who want the marks of a true and Saving Interest in Christ, already spoken of, and neither can nor dare pretend unto them.*

ANSW. If men miss in themselves the marks of a saving interest in Christ, spoken of before, then it is their duty, and of all that hear this gospel, personally and heartily to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, and this shall secure their state.

CHAP. I.

Some things premised for the information of those who are more ignorant.

For the better understanding of this, we shall premise some things for information of those who are more ignorant, and then speak more directly to the thing. As for the things to be premised :

1st. The Lord did, at the beginning, out of his bounty, make a covenant with man in Adam, Gen. ii. 16, 17, and did enable man to abide in that covenant, Eccles. vii. 29. " God hath made man upright;" but man, by eating of that forbidden fruit, Gen. iii. did break that covenant, Hosea vi. 7. " They, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant," and made it void forever, Rom. iii. 20. " By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight;" and involved himself into all misery thereby, Rom. v. 12. " As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

2dly. The Lord did most freely, from everlasting, purpose and intend to save men another way, viz. by Christ Jesus, and the covenant of grace, in which he intended reconcilement with the elect through Christ Jesus, God and man, born of a woman in due time, to make this agreement effectual. And this device of satisfying his own justice, and saving of the elect by Christ, he did at first intimate to our parents in paradise, Gen. iii. 15. where he saith, " that the seed of the woman shall bruise the

serpent's head." And the Lord hath in all generations made this known to his church.

3dly. The Lord hath in all ages covenanted to be the reconciled God of all these, who by their subjection to his ordinances did profess their satisfaction with this device, and oblige themselves to acquiesce in the same, and to seek salvation by Christ Jesus, as God doth offer him in the gospel; so all the people of Israel are called the Lord's people, and are said to avouch him to be their God, and he doth avouch them to be his people, Exod. xix. 5. 8. Deut. xxvi. 17, 18. Yea, the Lord doth also engage himself to be the God of the seed and children of those who do so subject themselves to his ordinances. The covenant is said to be made between God and all the people, young and old, present and not present that day, Deut. xxix. 10—15.; and all are appointed to come under some seal of that covenant, as was enjoined to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 10. Not only was it so in the Old Testament, but it is so in the New Testament also. The Lord makes offer of himself to be our God in Christ Jesus; and the people professing their satisfaction in that offer, and in testimony thereof subjecting themselves unto the ordinances, they are reckoned a covenanted people, and are joined unto his church in thousands, receiving a seal of the covenant, without any further particular previous trial, Acts ii. 38—41. "Then Peter said unto them, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.—Then they that glad-

ly received the word, were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Fourthly. Many do deal treacherously with God in this covenant; Psal. lxxviii. 36, 37. "Nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant. And although they profess their estimation of Christ the Saviour, and their heart satisfaction with that device of saving sinners by him, and having the image of God restored by him in them; yet their heart is not right with God, and they do content themselves with an empty title of being in a sealed covenant with God; John viii. 39. "Abraham is our father, say they." For although the Lord obligeth every man, who professeth his satisfaction with Christ Jesus, the devised ransom, to be cordial and sincere herein; and only to these who are so, doth he make out the spiritual promises of the covenant, they only being "privileged to be the sons of God, who do really receive Christ," John i. 12. yet the Lord doth permit many to profess their closing with him in Christ, both in the Old and New-Testament, whilst their heart is not engaged; and he doth admit them to be members of his church, granting unto them the use of ordinances and many other external mercies and privileges denied unto the heathen, who are not in covenant with him.

5thly. Although the greater part of people do foolishly fancy that they have closed with God in Christ Jesus sincerely and heartily; or, at

least, they do, without any ground or warrant, promise a new heart to themselves before they depart this life; yet there be but very few who do really and cordially close with God in Christ Jesus, as he is offered in the gospel; and so there be but very few saved; as is clear, Matth. vii. 14. "Straight is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be who find it;" Matth. xx. 16. "Many are called, but few are chosen." If people would believe this, it might help to alarm them.

6thly. Although none at all do cordially close with God in Christ Jesus, and acquiesce in that ransom found out by God, except only such as are elected; Rom. xi. 7. "But the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded; and whose hearts the Lord doth sovereignly determine to that blessed choice; John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; yet the Lord hath left it as a duty upon people who hear this gospel, to close with his offer of salvation through Christ Jesus, as if it were in their power to do it; and the Lord, through these commands and exhortations wherein he obligeth men to the thing, doth convey life and strength to the soul, and doth therein convey the new heart unto them, which pointeth kindly towards this new device of saving sinners, and towards Christ in his covenant relations; or, it is the Lord's mind, in these commands and invitations, to put people on some duty, with which he useth to concur for accomplishing that business between him and them; so then it is a coming on our part,

and yet a drawing on his part; John vi. 44.; it is a drawing on his part, and a running on our part, Cant. i. 4.; it is an approaching on our part, and yet a "choosing and causing to approach on his part," Psal. lxv. 4.; it is a blieving or receiving on our part, John i. 12. and yet "it is given us to believe," Phil. i. 29.

CHAP. II.

SECT. 1. *What is it to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, and that it is a necessary duty.*

Having premised these things, I say, if men do not find in themselves the marks of a saving interest in Christ, spoken of in the former part of the treatise; then, for securing their state, they are obliged, with all diligence, personally and heartily to accept of and close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, held out in the gospel.

In handling of this, we shall, 1st, Shew what it is to accept of and close with that noble invention. 2dly, We shall shew that it is the necessary duty of those who would be in favour with God and secure their souls. 3dly, What is previously required of those who perform this duty. 4thly, What are the qualifications and properties of this duty, if rightly managed. 5thly, What be the native consequences of it, if it be performed aright.

As for the first, What is it to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, held out in the gospel. Here we must remember as we shewed before, that at first God willed man to abide in his favour, by holding fast his first

integrity in which he was created; but man by his transgression lost God's favour, made void that covenant of works, and put himself in an utter incapacity to regain the Lord's friendship, which he had lost by his sin, and to rescue himself from the curse and wrath now due to him for the same, or any way to procure his own salvation: but the Lord freely hath manifested another way of repairing man's lost estate, viz. by sending his Son Christ Jesus in the flesh, to satisfy his justice for the sins of the elect, and to restore in them his image now defaced, and to bring them unto glory; and he hath made open proclamation in the church, that whosoever will lay aside all thoughts of saving themselves by the covenant of works, or inherent righteousness, and will agree heartily to be saved by Christ Jesus, they shall be restored to a better condition than formerly man was in, and shall be saved. So then to close with God's device of saving sinners by Christ Jesus, is to quit and forego all thoughts of help of salvation by our own righteousness, and to agree unto this way which God hath found out; it is to value and highly esteem of Christ Jesus as the treasure sufficient to enrich poor men, and with the heart to believe this record, that there is life enough in him for men; it is to please this invention, and to acquiesce in it, as the only way to true happiness; it is to point toward this Mediator, as God holdeth him out in the gospel, with desire to lay the stress of our whole state on him. This is that which is called faith, or believing, the "receiving of Christ," or "believing on his name," John 1. 12. This is that

"believing on the Lord Jesus Christ," commanded unto the jailer for his safety, Acts xvi. 31. this agreeth to all the descriptions of justifying faith in the scripture. This doth answer the type of "looking to the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness," John iii. 14, 15. and this is supposed in all these ordinary actings of faith to which promises are annexed in the scripture; and will be found in all who have got the new heart from God, and it will be found in none else.

As to the second thing, viz. That this is the necessary duty of all such who would be in favour with God and secure their souls; it appeareth thus:

1st. This closing with God's device, or believing in Christ, is commanded every where in scripture by the Lord as the condition of the new covenant, giving title and right unto all the spiritual blessings of the same; for it is, upon the matter, the receiving of Christ. This is commanded whilst God bids men come and buy, that is, impropriate all, by closing with that device. Isaiah lv. 1. The weary are commanded to come unto him thus for their rest, Matth. xi. 28. "This is his commandment, that we "should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23. This is enough to prove it a duty incumbent. But further, it is such a duty as only giveth title and right to a sonship; for only they who receive him are privileged to be sons, John i. 12. "But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name."

2dly. It appeareth to be the necessary duty of all, thus, no less than this doth give a meeting unto God, offering himself to be our God in Christ; and no less than this doth answer our profession, as we are in covenant with him, as members of his visible church. The Lord offereth to be our God in Christ; if we do not close with the offer, laying aside all thoughts of other ways by which we may attain to happiness, we give no meeting to him. He saith, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him," Matth. xvii. 5. If we close not with the offer, we give no answer unto God. Moreover, we are all "baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, Acts ii. 38. Now unless we close with Christ, as is said, we falsify that profession; therefore, since this is the thing which doth answer God's offer in the gospel, and maketh good our profession, as members of his church, it is a necessary duty lying upon us.

3dly. Whatsoever a man hath else, if he do not thus close with God's device concerning Christ Jesus, and do not receive him, it doth not avail, either as to the accepting of his person or of his performances, or as to the saving of his soul. Men are accepted only in Christ, the beloved, Eph. i. 6. Abel and his offering are accepted by faith. Heb. xi. 4.; "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Heb. xi. 6.; and "He that believeth not is condemned already, and shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 18. 36. For want of this, no external title doth avail: "the chil-

dren of the kingdom are cast out;" if this be wanting, Matth. viii. 10, 11, 12. The people of Israel are like other heathens in regard of a graceless state, lying open to the wrath of God; Jer. ix. 25, 26. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised, Egypt, and Judah, and Edom—for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart:" If men do not believe that he who was slain at Jerusalem, who was called Christ Jesus, and witnessed unto by the prophets, and declared to be the Son of God by many mighty works; I say, if men do not believe that he is the way, and close with him as the only way, they shall die in their sins; John viii. 24. "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

We say, then, it is a most necessary duty thus to close with Christ Jesus, as the blessed relief appointed for sinners. Every one who is come to years of understanding, and heareth this gospel, is obliged to take to heart his own lost condition, and God's gracious offer of peace and salvation through Christ Jesus, and speedily to flee from the wrath to come, by accepting and closing with this offer, heartily acquiescing therein as a satisfying way for saving of poor sinners. And, that all may be the more encouraged to set about this duty, when they hear him praying them to be reconciled unto him, let them remember, that peace and salvation is offered to the people in universal terms, to all without ex-

ception; "If any man will," he shall be welcome, Rev. xxii. 17. If any thirst, although after that which will never profit, yet they shall be welcome here, on the condition aforesaid, Isaiah lv. 2, 3. All are "commanded to believe." 1 John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." The promises are to all who are externally called by the gospel. God excludes none, if they do not exclude themselves; Acts ii. 39. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." So that if any have a mind for the thing, they may come forward, "he will in no wise cast them out," John vi. 37. being "able to save to the uttermost, them who come to God through him," Heb. vii. 25. And these who have long delayed to take this matter to heart had now the more need to look to it, lest what belongs to their peace be hid from their eyes. But all these words will not take effect with people, until "God pour out his spirit from on high," Isaiah xxxii. 15. to cause men to approach unto God in Christ; yet we must still press men's duty upon them, and obtest and charge them by the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, and their reckoning to him in that day, that they give the Lord no rest, until he send out that "spirit which he will give to them who ask it," Luke xi. 13. and cause them to know what belongs unto their peace, and bring them up to their duty.

SECT. 2. *What is previously required of those that would believe on Christ Jesus*

We come now to speak of the third thing, viz. what is previously required of those who are to perform this duty. Men must not rashly, inconsiderately, and ignorantly, rush in upon this matter, saying, they are pleased with that device of saving sinners by Christ, and will acquiesce and rest on him for safety. Often men do deceive themselves here, and do imagine that they have done the thing. We shall therefore hold out some things pre-required in a person who is to close with Christ Jesus; which although we offer not as positive qualifications, fitting a man for Christ that way, Isaiah lv. 1. "Come, without money, and without price;" yet they are such things, as without them a man cannot knowingly and cordially perform the duty of believing on Christ Jesus.

Beside the common principles which are to be supposed in those who live under gospel ordinances; as the knowledge that men have immortal souls; that soul and body will be united again at the last day; that there is a heaven and hell, one of which will be the everlasting lot of all men; that the Old and New Testament is the true word of God, and the rule of faith and manners; that every man is by nature void of the grace of God, and is an enemy unto God, and an heir of condemnation; that reconciliation is only by the Mediator Christ Jesus; that faith unites unto him, and is the condition of the new covenant; that holiness is the fruit of true faith, and is to be studied, as that without

which no man shall see God; I say, beside these things, the knowledge of which is necessary, it is required of him who would believe on Christ Jesus, first, that he take to heart his natural condition; and here he must know some things, and also be very serious about them: I say, he must know some things: as First, That as he was born a rebel and out-law unto God, so he hath by many actual transgressions disobliged God, and ratified the forfeiture of his favour: yea, a man should know many particular instances of his rebellion on all hands; as that he is a liar, sabbath breaker blasphemer or the like; as Paul speaketh very particularly of himself afterwards, 1 Tim. i. 13. Secondly, The man must know that the wrath of God denounced in scripture is standing in force against those very sins whereof he is guilty; and so, consequently, he is the party undoubtedly against whom God, who cannot lie, hath denounced war. A man must know that when the scripture saith, "cursed is he that offereth a corrupt thing unto God," Mal. i. 14. it speaketh against him for his superficial service performed unto God with the outward man, when his heart was far off. When the word saith, "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain," Exod. xx. 7. the man must know it speaketh against himself, who hath often carelessly profaned that dreadful "name before which all knees should bow," Philip. ii. 10. and "which his enemies do take in vain," Psal. cxxxix. 20. When the word saith, "cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently," Jer. xlviii. 10. the man must know that it speaks against him-

self, who hath irreverently, with much wandering of heart and drowsiness, heard the word preached; and without sense, faith, or understanding, hath often prayed before him. When the word saith, "Woe be unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, and putteth his bottle to him, to make him drunk also, that he may look on his nakedness," Hab. ii. 15, 16. the man must know that it is spoken against himself, who hath gloried in making his neighbour drunk, and that dreadful wrath is determined by the Lord against him, according to that scripture. When the word saith, "God will judge unclean persons" Heb. xiii. 4. and will shut them out of the "new Jerusalem, and they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, Rev. xxi. 8. the man must know that the scripture speaketh these very words against him, he being an unclean person; so that he is the person against whom the curses of the law do directly strike.

3dly. A man must know that he hath nothing of his own to procure his peace, and to set him free of the hazard under which he lieth: because "all his righteousness is as an unclean thing," Isaiah lxiv. 6. His prayers, his other service done to God, his alms-deeds, &c. are not pass guilt before God, since they came not from a right principle in his heart, and were not performed in a right way, nor upon a right account, nor for a right end; his "sacrifices have been an abomination unto God," Prov. xxi. 27.

4thly. He must know that as he is void of all the graces of the spirit, as the true love of God, the true fear of his name, godly sorrow for sin, &c. so particularly, that he wants faith in

Christ, who taketh burden for all them who believe on him. Until man know this, he will still leave all his debt and burden, without care or regard any where else, before he bring it to the common cautioner.

Now, not only must a man know these things as I said before, but must also very seriously take them to heart; that is to say, he must be affected with these things, and be in sad earnest about them, as he useth to be in other cases, wherein he useth to be most serious: yea, he should be more in earnest here, than in other cases, because it is of greater concernment unto him. This seriousness produceth,

(1.) A taking of salvation to heart more than any thing else. Shall men be obliged to "seek first the kingdom of God?" Matth vi. 33. is there but "one thing necessary?" Luke x. 42. shall Paul "count all things loss and dung" for this matter? Philip. iii. 8.: is "a man looser, gaining all the world if he loose his soul?" Mark viii. 36. shall this be the only ground of joy, "that men's names are written in the book of life? Luke x. 20. and shall not men who would be reckoned serious, take their soul and salvation more to heart than any thing else? Surely it cannot fail: let none deceive themselves. If the hazard of their soul, and the salvation thereof, and how to be in favour with God, hath not gone nearer to their heart than any thing in the world beside, it cannot be presumed upon just grounds, that they ever knew sin or God, or the everlastingness of his wrath, aright.

(2.) This seriousness breaketh the man's heart, and fainteth the stoutness of it, and leadeth it out to sorrow, as one doth for a first-born, Zech. xii. 10. I grant their sorrow will better suit that scripture afterwards, when they apprehend Christ pierced by their sins.

(3.) It leadeth the man to a self-loathing: A man taking up himself so cannot but loathe himself for his abominations, whereby he hath destroyed himself. There is somewhat of that spirit of revenge, which is mentioned as a fruit of true repentance, 2 Cor. vii. 11. "This self-same thing that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you—yea, what revenge!"

(4.) This seriousness doth make the man peremptory to find relief: since it is not in himself, he dare not put off and delay his business as before: and this is indeed required, that he find himself so pursued and put to it, that he flee for refuge somewhere. I grant some have a higher and some a less degree of this seriousness, as we shewed in the former part of this treatise: but if we speak of the Lord's ordinary way of working with those who are come to age, we say, they must very seriously take their soul's estate to heart, despairing of help in themselves, "since the whole need not a physician, but those who are sick," Matth. ix. 12. As for the measure, we plead only that which probably doth suppose that a man will be induced thereby to transact cordially with Christ, on any terms he doth offer himself to be closed with.

The second thing pre-required of him who would believe on Christ Jesus is, he must know and

take to heart the way of escape from God's wrath: the spirit must convince him of that righteousness. Here a man must understand somewhat distinctly, that God hath devised a way to save poor lost man by Jesus Christ, whose perfect righteousness hath satisfied offended justice, and procured pardon and everlasting favour to all those whom he persuadeth by this gospel, to accept of God's offer; Acts xiii. 38, 39. "Be it known unto you therefore—that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things." John i. 12. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." So that no person is excluded, of whatsoever rank or condition, whatsoever hath been his former way, unless he be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is a malicious hatred and rejection of the remedy appointed for sinners, as we shall hear: for all manner of sin is forgiven unto those who accept of the offer in God's way, Matth. xii. 31. "He is able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God through him," Heb. vii. 25.

The third thing pre-required is, a man must know that as God hath not excluded him from the relief appointed, so he is willing to be reconciled unto men through Christ, and hath obliged men to close with him through Christ Jesus, and so to appropriate that salvation to themselves. He not only invites all to come, Isaiah lv. 1, 2, and welcometh all that come, as we find in the gospel, and commandeth those who come as the institution, Matth. viii. 19. and the woman of

Canaan, Matth. xv. 28. and chideth for not coming and closing with him, John v. 40. "And ye will not come to me that ye might have life;" and condemneth for not closing so with him, John iii. 18. "He that believeth not, is condemned already;" but also he commandeth all to believe on Christ; 1 John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." So as a man is not to question the Lord's willingness to receive men who go to Christ honestly, for God hath abundantly cleared that in scripture. Unless that a man know so much, he will scarcely dare to lay his heart open for that noble device of saving sinners, or adventure his own weight and stress upon Christ Jesus.

The fourth thing pre-required is, the man who would close with Christ Jesus must resolve to break all covenants with hell and death, Isaiah xxviii. 15. Whatsoever known evil men are engaged in they must resolve to forego it; "for there is no concord between Christ and Belial," 2 Cor. vi. 14—18. The Lord requireth that they who would expect "him to be for them, should not be for another," Hosea iii. 3. This is far from evangelic repentance, which I grant doth not precede a man's closing with Christ by faith: there is little here beyond a disregard of these things unto which a man was formerly devoted, and a slighting what he was mad upon, because he seeth himself destroyed thereby, and relief now offered; whereupon his heart beginneth to be more intent than formerly it was. After this, when Christ is looked upon alone, his worth and beauty doth appear, so as among

all the gods, there is none like unto him, and he looketh out as a sufficient covering of the eyes to all who get him: upon which the heart loveth God's device in the new covenant, and loveth to lay its weight upon Christ rather than any other way, bending towards him; and so the man becometh a believer.

Now, I will not say that all these things, whereof we have spoken, are formerly, orderly, and distinctly, found in every person before he close with God in Christ; for the way of the heart with Christ may be added to "the four wonderful things," Prov. xxx. 18, 19. It is hard to trace the heart in its translation from darkness to light; yet we hold out the most ordinary and likely way to him who doth ask the way; debarring thereby ignorant and senseless persons from meddling, and discharging them to pretend to any interest in him whilst they remain such.

SECT. 3. *The properties and native consequences of true believing.*

The fourth thing we proposed to speak to is, the properties of this duty, when rightly gone about. I shall only hint a few.

1st. Believing on Christ must be personal; a man himself and in his own proper person must close with Christ Jesus; "The just shall live by his faith," Hab. ii. 4. This faith, that it will not suffice for a man's safety and relief, that he is in covenant with God as a born member of the visible church, by virtue of the parents subjection to God's ordinances: neither will it suffice that the person had the initiating seal of baptism added, and that he then virtually engaged to seek

salvation by Christ's blood, as all infants do; neither doth it suffice that men are come of believing parents; their faith will not instate their children into a right to the spiritual blessings of the covenant; neither will it suffice that parents did in some respect engage for their children, and give them away unto God; all these things do not avail. The children of the kingdom and of godly predecessors are cast out; unless a man, in his own person, put out faith in Christ Jesus, and with his own heart please and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners, he cannot be saved. I grant this faith is given unto him by Christ; but certain it is, that it must be personal.

2dly. This duty must be cordial and hearty; "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," Rom. x. 10. A man must be sincere, and without guile in closing with Christ, judging him the only covering of the eyes, not hankering after another way. The matter must not swim only in the head or understanding, but it must be in the heart; the man not only must be persuaded that Christ is the way, but affectionately persuaded of it, loving and liking the thing, having complacency in it; so that "it is all a man's desire," as David speaketh of the covenant, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, if a man be cordial and affectionate in any thing, surely he must be so here in this "one thing that is necessary." It must not be simply a fancy in the head, it must be a heart business, a soul business; yea, not a business in the outer court of affections, but in the flower of affections, and in the innermost cabinet of the soul, where Christ is formed. Shall a man be cordial in any thing, and

not in this, which doth comprize all his chief interests and his everlasting state within it? Shall "the Lord be said to rejoice over a man as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride?" Isaiah lxii. 5. and to "rest in his love with joy?" Zeph. iii. 17. and shall not the heart of man go out and meet him here? the heart or nothing; love or nothing; marriage-love, which goeth from heart to heart; love of espousals, or nothing; Prov. xxiii. 26. "My son, give me thine heart." 1 Cor. xiii. 2, 3. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." I will not say that there is in all as soon as they believe, a prevailing sensible love, which maketh sick; but there must be in believing a rational and kindly love, so well grounded, and deeply engaging, that "many waters cannot quench it: it is as strong as death, and jealousy is it burneth as fire," Cant. viii. 6, 7.

3dly. The third property or qualification of believing, as it goeth out after Christ, it must be rational. Hereby I mean, that the man should move towards God in Christ, in knowledge and understanding taking up God's device of saving sinners by Christ as the scripture doth hold it out: not fancying a Christ to himself otherwise than the gospel speaketh of him, nor another way of relief by him than the word of God holdeth out. Therefore we find knowledge joined to the covenant between God and man as a requisite; Jer. xxxiv. 7. "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord: and they "shall be my people, and I will be their God"

Jer. xxxi. 34. "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." I mean here also, that a man be in calmness of spirit, and, as it were in his cold blood, in closing with Christ Jesus; not in a simple fit of affection, which soon vanisheth; Matth. xiii. 20. "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;" nor in a distemper through some outward distress, as the people were, Psal. lxxviii. 34. "when he slew them, they then sought him and proved not steadfast in the covenant: nor under a temptation of some outward temporary interest, as Simon Magus was when he believed, Acts viii. A man must act here rationally, as being master of himself, in some measure able to judge of the good or evil of the thing as it stands before him.

4thly. The fourth is faith; as it goeth out rationally, so it goeth out resolutely. The poor distressed people in the gospel did most resolutely cast themselves upon Christ this resoluteness of spirit is in order to all difficulties that lie in the way; violence is offered to these. The man whose heart is a shaping out for Christ Jesus cannot say, "there is a lion in the street," Prov. xxvi. 13. If he cannot have access by the door he will break through the roof of the house, with that man, Luke v. 19. He often doth not regard that which the world calleth discretion or prudence, like Zaccheus climbing up on a tree to see Christ, when faith was breeding

in his bosom, Luke xix. This resoluteness of spirit looketh towards what inconveniences may follow, and waveth all these; at least, resolving over all these, like "a wise builder, who reckoneth the expense before hand," Luke xiv. 28. This resoluteness is also in order to all a man's idols, and such weights as would easily beset him, if he did not bend after Christ over them all, like that blind man who did cast his garment from him when Christ called him, Mark x. 50. This resoluteness in the soul proceedeth from desperate self necessity within the man, as it was with the jailer, Acts xvi. 30. and from the sovereign command of God, obliging the man to move towards Christ; 1 John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ;" and from the good report gone abroad of God, that "he putteth none away that come unto him through Christ," John vi. 37. but doth commend such as do adventure over the greatest difficulties, as the woman of Canaan, Matth. xv. 28. But above all, this resoluteness doth proceed from the arm of Jehovah, secretly and strongly drawing the sinner towards Christ, John vi. 44. "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him."

I will not say that every one, closing with Christ in the offers of the gospel, hath all the foresaid thoughts formally in his mind; yet, upon search, it will be found, if he be put to it, or put in mind of these things, they are then aloft in the soul.

By what is said, it doth manifestly appear, that many in the visible church had need to do somewhat further for securing of their soul, when they come to years of discretion, than is found to have been done by them before, in the covenant between God and the church, sealed to them in baptism.

By what is said also, there is a competent guard upon the free grace of God in the gospel, held out through Christ Jesus; so as ignorant, senseless, profane men cannot, with any shadow of reason, pretend to an interest in it. It is true, believing in Christ, and closing with him as a perfect saviour, seemeth easy, and every godless man saith, that he believeth on him: but they deceive themselves, since their soul hath never cordially, rationally, and resolutely gone out after Christ Jesus, as we have said. It may be some wicked men have been enlightened, Heb. vi. 4. and have found some excitement in their fear, Felix trembled, Acts xxiv. 25.; or in their joy; "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it," Matth. xiii. 20.; and "Herod heard John gladly," Mark vi. 20.; but not "having engaged their heart in approaching to God," Jer. xxx. 21. have either sitten down in that common work, as their sanctuary, until the trial came, Matth. xiii, 20, 21. "When tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended;" or, "they return back with the dog to their vomit," from which they had in some measure "escaped by the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour," 2 Peter ii. 20, 21, 22.; or they utterly fall away

to the hatred and malicious despising and persecuting of Christ and his interests; "from whence hardly can they be recovered," Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. and x. 26. 29. Which things should provoke men to be serious in this great business.

We come now to speak to the fifth thing proposed, and that is, the native consequences of true believing. I shall reduce what I will speak of them to these two, viz. union with God, and communion. First, then I say, when a sinner closeth with Christ Jesus, as is said, there is presently an admirable union, a strange oneness, between God and the man. As the husband and wife, head and body, root and branches, are not to be reckoned two—but one; so Christ, or God in Christ, and the sinner closing with him by faith, are one: "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," &c. Eph. v. 30, 31, 32. "He that is so joined unto the Lord, is one spirit," 1 Cor. vi. 17. "As the Father is in the Son, and Christ in the Father; so believers are one in the Father and the Son: they are one, as the Father and the Son are one. The Father in Christ, and Christ in believers, that they may be made perfect in one," John xvii. 21, 22, 23. 26. O what a strange interweaving, and indissoluble knot there!

Because of this union betwixt God and the believer,

(1.) They can never hate one another. Henceforth the Lord will never hate the believer. "As no man hateth his own flesh at any time, but cherisheth and nourisheth it," Eph. v. 29. so doth Christ his people. He may be angry, so as to correct, and chastise the man that is a be-

liever; but all he doth to him is for his good and advantage. "All the Lord's paths must be mercy and truth to him," Psal. xxv. 10. "All things must work together for good to him," Rom. viii. 28. On the other side, the believer can never hate God maliciously; for "He that is born of God sinneth not," 1 John iii. 9. For the Lord hath resolved and ordained things so, that his hand shall undoubtedly so be upon all believers for good, that they shall never get leave to hate him, and be so plucked out of his hand.

(2.) Because of this union there is a strange sympathy and fellow-feeling between God and the believer. "The Lord is afflicted with the man's affliction," Isaiah lxiii. 9. He doth tenderly, carefully, and seasonably resent it, as if he were afflicted with it. "He who toucheth the believer, toucheth the apple of the Lord's eye," Zech. ii. 8. "He is touched with the feeling of their infirmities," Heb. iv. 15.; and precious in his sight is their blood," Psal. cxvi. 15. In a word, what is done to them, is done unto him; and what is not done unto them, is not done unto him; Matth. x. 40. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me." Matth. xxv. 40. 45. "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." On the other part, "the zeal of his house" sitteth in the heart of the believer; Psal. lxix. 9. "The Lord's reproach" lighteth on the believer. If it go well with his affairs, that is the business of his people. So there is a strange sympathy between God and believers, all by virtue of the union between them; because of

which, men should hate every thing which would rival him in their love or affections, and should disdain to be slaves to the creatures, since these are the servants of their Lord and husband, and their servants through him. It is a shame for a believer to be "afraid of evil tidings," since the Lord, with whom he is one, alone ruleth all things," and doth whatsoever pleaseth him in heaven and earth." 1 Cor. iii. 21. 23. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Psal. cxii. 6, 7. "Surely he shall not be moved forever, he shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord, his heart is established, he shall not be afraid." Psal. cxv. 3. "Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased."

The other great consequences of believing, is an admirable, unparalleled communion; by virtue whereof, 1. The parties themselves do belong each to other. The Lord is the God of his people: he himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is their God, in all his glorious attributes; his justice as well as his mercy; his wisdom, power, holiness, &c.; for he becometh the God of his people, as he often speaketh in the covenant. On the other part, the believers are his people. In their very persons they are his, as the covenant doth speak: they shall be his people; their head, their heart, their hand, &c. whatsoever they are, they are his.

2. By virtue of this communion they have a mutual interest in one another's whole goods in as far as can be useful. All the Lord's word doth belong to the believer, threatenings as

well as promises, for their good; all his ways, all his works of all sorts, special communications, death, devils, even all things, in so far as can be useful; 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22, 23. "All things are yours; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." On the other side, all which belongeth to the believer is the Lord's; heritage, children, life, wife, credit, &c. all is at his disposing; if any of these can be useful to him, the believer is to forego them, else he falsifieth that communion, and declareth himself, in so far, unworthy of Christ, Luke xiv. 26. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, yea, and his life also, he cannot be my disciple."

3. By virtue of this communion, there should be much intercourse and familiarity between God and the believer. The Lord may meddle with any thing which doth belong to the believer, and do unto him what seemeth good to him; and the man is not to mistake, or say unto God, "what dost thou? except in so far as concerneth his duty; yea, he is still to say in every case, "good is the word and will of the Lord," Isaiah xxxix. 8.; 2 Kings iv. 23. 26. On the other part, the believer may in an humble way be intimate and familiar with God in Christ; he may come with boldness to the throne of grace," and not use a number of compliments in his addresses unto God, Heb. iv. 16. for he is no more a stranger unto God," Eph. ii. 19. so that he needs not speak unto God as one who has acquaintance to make every hour, as many pro-

fessors do; and it maketh a huge inconsistency in their religion.

The believer also may lay open all his heart unto God; 1 Sam. i. 15. "I have poured out my soul before the Lord," and impart all his secrets unto him, and all his temptations, without fear of a mistake. The believer also may inquire into what God doth, in so far as may concern his own duty, or in so far as may ward off mistakes of the Lord's way, and reconcile it with his word; so Job xiii. 15. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; but I will maintain mine own ways before him." The believer is a friend in this respect, as "knowing what the master doth." See Gen. xviii. 23. &c. Jer. xii. 1 Isaiah lxiii. 17.

The believer also may be familiar with God, to go in daily with his failings, and seek repentance, pardon and peace, through Christ's advocateship; Acts v. 31. "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins;" 1 John ii. 1. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." O how often in one day may the believer plead pardon, if he intend not to mock God, or to turn grace into wantonness! The Lord hath commanded men to forgive seventy times seven times in one day;" and hath hinted there in the parable of a king who took account of his servants," how much more the master will forgive, Matth. xviii. 22—28.

The believer also may be satisfied to entrust God with all his outward concernments, for he doth care for these things; Matth. vi. 30, 31, 32.

"If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." 1 Peter v. 7. "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Yea, the believer may humbly put God to it, to make him forthcoming for him in all cases as beseemeth, and to help him to suitable fruit in every season, "even grace in time of need," Heb. iv. 16. Yea, how great things may believers seek from him in Christ Jesus, both for themselves and others! 1 John v. 14, 15. "If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." John xiv. 13. "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." Isaiah xlv. 11. "Ask of me things to come concerning my sons; and concerning the work of my hands command ye me." It is the shame and great prejudice of his people that they do not improve that communion with God more than they do: Christ may justly upbraid them, that they ask nothing in his name, John xvi. 24.

By what is said, it doth appear of how great consequence this duty of believing is, by which a man closeth with Christ Jesus whom the father hath sealed, and given for a covenant to the people. It is so honourable for God, answering his very design, and serving his interest in the whole contrivement and manifestation of the gospel; and it is so advantageous to men, that Satan, and an evil heart of unbelief do mightily

oppose it, by moving objections against it. I shall hint some most ordinary.

CHAP. III.

Objections taken from a man's unworthiness, and the heinousness of his sin, answered.

Object. I am so base and worthless of myself, that I think it were high presumption for me to meddle with Christ Jesus, or the salvation purchased at the price of his blood.

Answ. It is true, all the children of Adam are base and naughty before him, "who chargeth his angels with folly," Iob iv. 18. "All nations are less than nothing, and vanity before him." Isaiah xl. 17. There is such a disproportion between God and men, that unless he himself had devised that covenant, and of his own free will had offered so to transact with men, it had been high treason for men or angels to have imagined that God should have humbled himself, and become a servant, and have taken on himself our nature, and have united it by a personal union to the blessed Godhead; and that he should have subjected himself to the shameful death of the cross; and all this, that men, who were rebels, should be reconciled unto God, and be made eternally happy, by being in his holy company forever.

But I say, all that was his own device and free choice: yea, moreover, if God had not sovereignly commanded men so to close with him in and through Christ, Isaiah lv. 1, 2, 3. Matth. xi. 28. 1, John iii. 23. 2 Cor. v. 20. no man durst have made use of that device of his. So then, although with Abigail I might say, "Let

me be but a servant, to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord," 1 Sam. xxv. 41. yet since he hath in his holy wisdom devised that way, and knoweth how to be richly glorified in it, Eph. i. 18. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know—what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." John xvii. 10. "All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them;" and he hath commanded me, as I shall be answerable in the great day, to close with him in Christ, as is said, I dare not disobey, nor inquire into the reason of his contrivements and commands, but must adventure on the business, as I would not be found to "frustrate the grace of God," Gal. ii. 21. and in a manner disappoint the gospel, and falsify the record which God hath borne of his Son, that there is life enough in him for men, 1 John v. 10, 11. and so make God a liar, and add that rebellion to all my former transgressions.

Objec. I am a person singularly sinful, beyond any I know; therefore I dare not presume to go near unto Christ Jesus, or look after that salvation which is through his righteousness.

Answ. Is your sin beyond the drunkenness and incest of Lot; adultery covered with murder, in David; idolatry and horrid apostacy in Solomon; idolatry, murder, and witchcraft in Manasseh; anger against God and his way, in Jonah; for swearing of Christ in Peter after he was forewarned, and had vowed the contrary; bloody persecution in Paul, making the saints to blaspheme, &c. (but woe to him who is emboldened to sin by these instances recorded in scrip-

ture, and adduced here to the commendation of the free and rich grace of God, and to encourage poor penitent sinners to flee unto Christ;) I say, are your sins beyond these? yet all these obtained pardon through Christ, as the scripture doth shew.

Know, therefore that all sins do lie alike level before the free grace of God, "who loveth freely," Hosea xiv. 4. and looketh not to less or more sin. If the person have a heart to "come unto him through Christ, then he is able to save to the uttermost," Heb. vii. 25. Yea, it is more provoking before God, not to close with Christ when the offer cometh to a man, than all the rest of his transgressions are; for "he that believeth not hath made God a liar, in that record he hath borne of life in the Son;" 1 John v. 10, 11. "And he who doth not believe, shall be condemned for not believing on the Son of God," John iii. 18. That shall be the main thing in his ditty; so that much sin cannot excuse a man if he be afraid of Christ and shift his offer: since God hath openly declared, that "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, Christ came to save sinners, whereof I am chief." Even he who is chief of sinners in his own apprehension, is bound to believe and "accept this saying;" 1 Tim. i. 15.

OBJECT. My sins have some aggravating circumstances beyond the same sins in other persons, which doth much terrify me.

ANSW. What can the aggravations of thy sins be, which are not paralleled in the forecited examples? is thy sin against great light? so did many of those we spake of before. Was it

against singular mercies and deliverances? so was that of Lot's and Noah's drunkenness. Was thy sin done with much deliberation? so was David's, whilst he wrote the letter against Uriah. Was it against or after any singular manifestation of God? So was Solomon's. Was it by a small and despicable temptation? so was that of Jonah and of Peter; if we consider the heinousness of their transgression. Hast thou reiterated the sin, and committed it over again? so did Lot, so did Peter, so did Jehoshaphat in joining with Ahab and Jehoram, 1 Kings xxii. 2 Kings iii. Are there many gross sins concurring together in thee? so were there in Manasseh. Hast thou stood long out in rebellion? (that, as the former, is thy shame: but) so did the "thief on the cross;" he stood it out to the last gasp, Luke xxiii. 42, 43. If yet "thou hast an ear to hear," thou art commanded to hear," Matth. xiii. 9. Although thou hast long "spent thy money for that which is not bread," Isaiah lv. 1, 2. thou hast the greater need now to make haste, and to flee for refuge; and if thou do so, he shall welcome thee, and "in no wise cast thee out," John vi. 37. especially since he hath used no prescription of time in scripture. So that all those aggravations of thy sin will not excuse thy shifting of the Lord's offer.

OBJECT. In all these instances given, you have not named the particulars whereof I am guilty; nor know I any who ever obtained mercy before God, being guilty of such things as are in me.

ANS. It is hard to condescend upon every particular transgression which may vex the conscience; yea, less sins than some of those I

have mentioned, may hugely disquiet, if the Lord blow the fire. But for thy satisfaction, I shall condescend upon some truths of scripture, which do reach sins and cases more universally than any man can do particularly. See Exod. xxxiv. 7. "God pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin;" that is, all manner of sin. Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, 30. "If a man turn from all his wickedness, it shall no more be remembered, or prove his ruin." John vi. 37. "Him that cometh, he will in no wise cast out;" that is, whatsoever be his sins, or the aggravations of them. John iii. 16. "Whosoever believeth shall have everlasting life;" that is, without exception of any sin, or any case. Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him;" no man can sufficiently declare what is God's uttermost. Matth. xii. 31. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men;" that is, there is no sort of sin, whereof one instance shall not be forgiven in one person or other, "except the sin against the Holy Ghost." These and the like scriptures do carry all sorts of sin before them; so that, let thy sins be what they will, or can be, they may be sunk in one of these truths; so as thy sin can be no excuse to thee for shifting the offer of peace and salvation through Christ, since "any man who will," is allowed to "come and take," Rev. xxii. 17.

We will not multiply words: the great God of heaven and earth hath sovereignly commanded all who see their need of relief to betake themselves unto Christ Jesus, and to close cordially with God's device of saving sinners by

him, laying aside all objections and excuses, as they shall be answerable unto him in the day he shall judge the quick and the dead, and shall drive away out of his presence all these who would dare to say, their sins and condition were such as that they durst not adventure upon Christ's perfect righteousness for their relief, notwithstanding of the Lord's own command often interposed, and in a manner his credit engaged.

CHAP. IV.

Of the sin against the Holy Ghost.

OBJECT. I suspect I am guilty of the "sin against the Holy Ghost," and so am incapable of pardon; and therefore I need not think of believing on Christ Jesus for saving of my soul.

ANSW. Although none should charge this sin on themselves, or on others, unless they can prove and instruct the charge according to Christ's example, Matth. xii. 25, 26. 32. yet, for satisfying of the doubt, I shall, 1st, Shew what is not the sin against the Holy Ghost, properly so called, because there be some gross sins which people do unwarrantably judge to be this unpardonable sin. 2dly, I shall shew what is the sin against the Holy Ghost. 3dly, I shall draw some conclusions in answer directly to the objection.

As for the first, there be many gross sins, which although, as all other sins, they be sins against the Holy Ghost, who is God equal and one with the Father and the Son, and are done against some of his operations and motions; yet are they not "the sin against the Holy Ghost,"

which is the unpardonable sin. As 1st, Blaspheming of God under bodily tortures is not that sin: for some saints fell into this; Acts xxvi. 11. "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme;" much less blaspheming of God in a fit of distraction or frenzy; for a man is not a free rational agent at that time: and "he that spareth his people, as a father doth the son that serveth him," Mal. iii. 17. and pitieth them that fear him, as a father pitieth his children, Psal. ciii. 13. so doth he spare and pity in these rovings; for so would our fathers according to the the flesh do, if we blasphemed them in a fit of distraction, much less are horrid blasphemies against God darted in upon the soul, and not allowed there, this unpardonable sin; for such things were offered to Christ, Matth. iv. and are often cast in upon the saints.

2dly. The hating of good in others, whilst I am not convinced that it is good, but in my light do judge it to be evil; yea, the speaking against it, yea, the persecuting of it in that case, is not the sin against the Holy Ghost; for all these will be found in Paul before he was converted; and he obtained mercy, because he did these things ignorantly.

3dly. Heart-rising at the thriving of others in the work and way of God whilst I love it in myself; yea, the rising of heart against Providence, which often expresseth itself against the creatures nearest our hand; yea, this rising of heart entertained and maintained, (although they be horrid things leading towards that unpardonable sin, yet) are not that sin, for these may be in the

saints, proceeding from self-love, which cannot endure to be darkened by another, and proceeding from some cross in their idol under a fit of temptation; the most part of all this was in Jonah, chap. iv.

4thly. Not only are not decays in what once was in the man, and falling into gross sins against light after the receiving of the truth, this unpardonable sin; for then many of the saints in scripture were undone: but further, apostacy from much of the truth is not that sin; for that was in Solomon, and in the church of Corinth and Galatia: yea, denying, yea, forswearing of the most fundamental truth under a great temptation is not this sin; for then Peter had been undone.

5thly. As resisting, quenching, grieving, and vexing of the spirit of God by many sinful ways, are not this unpardonable sin; for they are charged with these who are called to repentance in scripture, and not shut out as guilty of this sin; so neither reiterating sin against light is the sin against the Holy Ghost, although it leadeth towards it; for such was Peter's sin in denying Christ; so was Jehoshaphat's sin in joining with Ahab and Jehoram.

6thly. Purposes and essays of self-murder, and even purposes of murdering godly men, the party being under a sad fit of temptation; yea, actual self-murder, (although probably it often joineth in the issue with this unpardonable sin which ought to make every soul look upon the very temptation to it with horror and abhorrence, yet) is not the sin against the Holy Ghost. The jailer intended to kill himself upon a worse ac-

count than many poor people do, in the sight and sense of God's wrath, and of their own sin and corruption; yet that jailer obtained pardon, Acts xvi. 27. 34: and Paul, before his effectual calling, was accessory unto the murder of many saints, and intended to kill more, as himself granteth, Acts xxvi. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Although all these are dreadful sins, each of them deserving wrath everlasting, and not being repented of, bring endless vengeance: especially the last cuts of hope of relief, for ought can be expected in an ordinary way: yet none of these is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost; and so under any of these there is hope to him that has an ear to hear the joyful sound of the covenant. All manner of such sin and blasphemy may be forgiven, as is clear in the scripture, where these things are mentioned.

As for the second thing: let us see what the sin against the Holy Ghost is. It is not a simple act of transgression, but a complex of many mischievous things, involving soul and body ordinarily in guilt. We thus describe it: "It is a rejecting and opposing of the chief gospel truth, and way of salvation, made out singularly to a man by the spirit of God, in the truth and good thereof; and that avowedly, freely, wilfully, maliciously, and despitely breeding hopeless fear." There be three places of scripture which do speak most of this sin, and thence we will prove every part of this description, in so far as may be useful to our present purpose; by which it will appear that none who have a mind for Christ need stumble at what is spoken of this sin in

scripture. See Matth. xii. 23. 32.—Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. and x. 26—29.

1st. Then, let us consider the object about which this sin, or sinful acting of the man guilty thereof, is conversant, and that is the chief gospel truth and way of salvation; both which run to one thing. It is the way which God hath contrived for saving sinners by Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah and Saviour, by whose death and righteousness men are to be saved, as he hath held forth in the ordinances, confirming the same by many mighty works in scripture tending that way. This way of salvation is the object. The Pharisees oppose this, that Christ was the Messiah; Matth. xii. 23, 24. "And all the people said, is not this the son of David? But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, this fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the Prince of the devils." The wrong is done against the Son of God; Heb. vi. 6. "It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame:" and against the blood of the covenant, and the spirit graciously offering to apply these things; Heb. x. 29. "Of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?"

2dly. In the description, consider the qualification of this object. It is singularly made out to the party by the spirit of God, both in the truth and good thereof. This saith, 1. That

there must be knowledge of the truth and way of salvation. The Pharisees knew that Christ was the heir; Matth. xxi. 38. "But when they saw the Son, they said among themselves this is the heir, come let us kill him." The party hath knowledge; Heb. x. 26. "But if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." 2. That knowledge of the thing must not swim only in the head, but there must be some half heart persuasion of it. "Christ knew the Pharisees thoughts, Matth. xii. 25. and so did judge them, and that the contrary of what they speak was made out upon their heart. There is a tasting which is beyond simple enlightening; Heb. vi. 4, 5. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have tasted of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come." Yea, there is such a persuasion ordinarily as leadeth to a deal of outward sanctification; Heb. x. 29. "Who hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing." This persuasion must not only be of the verity of the thing, but of the good of it: the party "tasteth the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come;" Heb. vi. 5. and he apprehendeth the thing as eligible. 4. This persuasion is not made out only by strength of argument, but also by an enlightening work of God's spirit shining on the truth, and making it conspicuous; therefore is that sin called "the sin against the Holy Ghost, Matth. xii. 31. Mark iii. 29. The persons are "said to have been made partakers of

the Holy Ghost," Heb. vi. 4. and "to do despite unto the spirit of grace," Heb. x. 29. who was in the nearest step of a gracious operation with them.

3dly. In this description, consider the acting of the party against the object so qualified. It is a rejecting and opposing of it; which importeth, 1. That men have once, some way at least, been in hands with it, or had the offer of it, as is true of the Pharisees. 2. That they do reject, even with contempt, what they had of it, or in their offer. The Pharisees deny it, and speak disdainfully of Christ, Matth. xii. 24. "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.—They fall away, intending to put Christ to an open shame," Heb. vi. 6. 3. The men set themselves against it by the spirit of persecution, as the Pharisees did still. They rail against it; therefore it is called "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," Matth. xii. 24. 31. They would "crucify Christ again," if they could, Heb. vi. 6. They are adversaries, Heb. x. 27.

4thly. Consider the properties of this acting. 1. It is avowed, that is, not seeking to shelter or hide itself. The Pharisees speak against Christ publickly, Matth. xii. 24. They would have "Christ brought to an open shame," Heb. vi. 6. They forsake the ordinances which favour that way, Heb. x. 25. and despise the danger; for "looking for indignation, they trample that blood still," Heb. x. 27. 29. 2. The party acteth freely. It is not from unadvisedness, nor from force or constraint, but an acting of free choice; nothing doth force the Pharisees

to speak against and persecute Christ. They "crucify to themselves," they re-act the murder of their own free accord, and in their own bosom, none constraining them," Heb. vi. 6. They sin of free choice, or, as the word may be rendered, spontaneously, Heb. x. 26. 3. It is acted wilfully. They are so resolute they will not be dissuaded by any offer, or the most precious means, as is clear in the foresaid scriptures. 4. It is done maliciously, so as it proceeds not so much, if at all, from a temptation to pleasure, profit, or honour. It proceedeth not from fear or force, or from any good end proposed, but out of heart malice against God and Christ, and the advancement of his glory and kingdom: so that it is of the very nature of Satan's sin, who hath an irreconcileable hatred against God, and the remedy of sin, because his glory is thereby advanced. This is a special ingredient in this sin. The Pharisees are found guilty of heart malice against Christ, since they spake so against him, and not against their own children casting out devils; and this is the force of Christ's argument; "If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out?" Matth. xii. 27. They do their utmost "to crucify Christ again, and to bring him to an open shame," Heb. vi. 6. They are adversaries, like the devil, Heb. x. 27. 5. It is done despitefully; the malice must betray itself. The Pharisees must proclaim that Christ hath correspondence with devils, Matth. xii. 24.: he must "be put to an open shame, and crucified again," Heb. vi. 6.; they must "tread under foot that blood, and do despite to the spirit," Heb. x. 29.; so that the

party had rather perish a thousand times than be in Christ's debt for salvation.

The last thing in the description is, the ordinary attendant or consequence of this sin; it breedeth desperate and hopeless fear. They fear him whom they hate with a slavish, hopeless fear, such as devils have; Heb. x. 27. "A certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." They know that God will put out his power against them; they tremble in the remembrance of it; and if they could be above him, and destroy him, they covet it; and since they cannot reach that, they hate with the utmost of least malice, and do persecute him, and all that is his, with despite.

As for the third thing proposed, viz. the conclusions to be drawn from what is said, whereby we will speak directly to the objection. 1. As I hinted before, since the sin against the Holy Ghost is so remarkable, and may be well known where it is, none should charge themselves with it unless they can prove and instruct the charge; for it is a great wrong done unto God to labour to persuade my soul that he will never pardon me: it is the very way to make me desperate, and to lead me unto the unpardonable sin; therefore, unless thou canst and dare say that thou dost hate the way which God hath devised for saving of sinners, and dost resolve to oppose the thriving of his kingdom, both with thyself and others, out of malice and despite against God, thou oughtest not to suspect thyself guilty of this sin. 2. Whatsoever thou hast done against

God, if thou dost rue it, and wish it were undone, thou cannot be guilty of this sin; for in it heart malice and despite against God do still prevail. If thou art content to be his debtor for pardon, and would be infinitely obliged unto him for it, then thou cannot in that case be guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost; for, as we shewed before, they who are guilty of it do so despite God, that they would not be his debtors for salvation. 4. Whatsoever thou hast done, if thou hast a desire after Jesus Christ, and dost look with a sore heart after him, and cannot think of parting with his blessed company forever; or, if thou must part with him, yet dost wish well to him, and all his, thou needest not suspect thyself to be guilty of this unpardonable sin; for there can be no such hatred of him in thy bosom as is necessarily required to make up that sin. 5. If thou would be above the reach of that sin, and secure against it forever, then go work up thy heart to choose salvation by Christ Jesus, and to close with God in him, acquiescing in him as the sufficient ransom and rest, as we have been pressing before, and yield to him to be saved in his way. Do this in good earnest, and thou shalt be forever put out of the reach of that ugly thing wherewith Satan doth affright so many poor seekers of God.

CHAP. V.

Objections taken from want of power to believe, and unfruitfulness, answered.

Object. Although I be not excluded from the benefit of the new covenant, yet it is not in

my power to believe upon Christ; for faith is the gift of God, and above the strength of flesh and blood.

Answ. It is true, that saving faith, by which alone a man can heartily close with God in Christ, is above our power, and is the gift of God, as we said before in the premises: yet remember, 1. The Lord hath left it as a duty upon all who hear this gospel cordially by faith to close with his offer of salvation through Christ, as is clear in the scripture. And you must know, that although it be not in our power to perform that duty of ourselves, yet the Lord may justly condemn for not performing of it, and we are inexcusable; because at first he made man perfectly able to do whatsoever he should command. 2. The Lord commanding this thing, which is above our power, willeth us to be sensible of our inability to do the thing, and would have us putting it on him to work it in us. He hath promised to give the new heart, and he hath not excluded any from the benefit of that promise. 3. The Lord useth, by these commands and invitations, and men's meditation on the same, and their supplication about the thing, to convey power unto the soul to perform the duty.

Therefore, for answer to the objection, I do beseech thee, in the Lord's name, to lay to heart these his commandments and promises, and meditate on them, and upon that blessed business of the new covenant, and pray unto God, as you can, over them, "for he will be "inquired to do these things," Ezek. xxxvi. 37. and lay thy cold heart to that device of God expressed in the scriptures, and unto Christ Jesus, who is given

fer a covenant to the people, and look to him for life and quickening. Go and essay to be pleased with that salvation in the way God doth offer it and to close with, and rest on Christ for it, as if all were in thy power; yet looking to him for the thing as knowing that it must come from him; and if thou do so, "he who meets those who remember him in his ways," Isaiah lxiv. 5. will not be wanting on his part; and then shalt not have ground to say, that thou movedst towards the thing until thou couldst do no more for want of strength, and so left it at God's door: it shall not fail on his part, if thou have a mind for the business: yea, I may say, if by all thou hast ever heard of that matter, thy heart loveth it, and desireth to be in hands with it, thou hast it already performed within thee; so that difficulty is past before thou wast aware of it.

OBJECT. Many who have closed with Christ Jesus, as is said, are still complaining of their leanness and fruitlessness, which maketh my heart lay the less weight on that duty of believing.

ANSW. If thou be convinced that it is a duty to believe on Christ, as is said, you may not shift it under any pretence. As for these complaints of some who have looked after him, not admitting every one to be judge of his own fruit, I say,

(1.) Many, by their jealousies of God's love, and by their unbelief, after they have so closed with God, do obstruct many precious communications, which otherwise would be let out to them; Matth. xiii. 58. "And he did not ma-

ny mighty works there because of their unbelief."

(2.) It cannot be that any whose heart is gone out after Christ "have found him a wilderness," Jer. ii. 31. Surely they find somewhat in their spirit swaying them towards God in these two great things, viz. how to be found in him in that day; Philip. iii. 8, 9. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: and how to be forthcoming to his praise in the land of the living; Psal. cxix. 17. "Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live and keep thy word." Psal. lvi. 13. Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living? They find these two things aloft in the soul, and that is much. Moreover they shall, after search, if they judge aright, find ever such an emptiness in the creatures, which abundance of the creature cannot fill up: all is vanity, only God can fill the empty room in their heart and when he but breatheth a little, there is no room for additional comfort from creatures. This faith, that God hath captivated the man, and hath fixed that saving principle in the understanding and heart. "Who is God but the Lord? worship him all ye gods," Psal. xcvii. 7. Yea, further, these whose heart hath closed with God in Christ, as is said, will not deny that there have

been seasonable preventings and quickenings now and then when the soul was like to fail; Psal. xxi. 3. For thou preventest me with the blessings of thy goodness." Psal. xciv. 18, 19. When I said my foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Lord held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul. Therefore let none say, that there is no fruit following, and let none shift their duty upon the unjust and groundless complaints of others.

CHAP. VI.

Of covenanting with God.

OBJECT. Although I judge it my duty to close with God's device in the covenant, I am in the dark how to manage that duty; for sometimes God doth offer to be our God without any mention of Christ, and sometimes saith that he will betrothe us unto him; and in other places of scripture we are called to come to Christ, and he is the bridegroom. Again, God sometimes speaketh of himself as a father to men, sometimes as a husband; Christ is sometimes called the husband, and sometimes a brother; which relations seem inconsistent, and do much put me in the dark how to apprehend God when my heart would agree with him and close with him.

ANSW. It may be very well said, that men do come to God, or close with him, and yet they come to Christ, and close with him. They may be said to come under a marriage relation unto God, and unto Christ also, who is husband, father, brother, &c. to them, and there is no such mystery here as some do conceive.

For the better understanding of it, consider

these few things, 1st, Although God made man perfect at the beginning, and put him in some capacity of transacting with him immediately; Eccles. vii. 29. "God hath made man upright." Gen. ii. 16, 17. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat," &c. yet man by his fall did put himself at a perfect distance with God, and in an utter incapacity to bargain or deal any more with him immediately. 2dly, The Lord did, after Adam's fall, make manifest the new covenant, in which he did signify he was content to transact with man again, in and through a Mediator; and so did appoint men to come to him through Christ; Heb. vii. 25. "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him; and to look for acceptation only in him; Eph. 1. 6. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved;" ordaining men to hear Christ, he being the only party in whom God was well pleased; Matth. xvii. 5. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him."

3dly. This matter is so clear, and supposed to be so plain in the scripture, and so manifest to all who are under the ordinances, that the Lord doth often speak of transacting with himself, not making mention of the mediator, because it is supposed that every one in the church knoweth that now there is no dealing with God, except by and through Christ Jesus the mediator.

4thly. Consider that Christ Jesus, God-man, is not only a fit place for God and men to meet in, and a fit spokesman to treat between the par-

ties now at variance: 2 Cor. v. 19. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" but we may say also, he is immediate bridegroom; and so our closing or transacting with God may be justly called the marriage of the king's son, and the elect may be called the Lamb's wife; Christ Jesus being as it were, the hand which God holdeth out unto men, and on which they lay hold when they deal with God, and so, through and by Christ we close with God, as our God on whom our soul doth terminate lastly and ultimately through Christ; 1 Peter i. 21. "Who by him do believe in God that raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God."

5thly. Consider that the divers relations mentioned in scripture are set down, to signify the sure and indissoluble union and communion between God and his people. Whatsoever nearness is between head and members, root and branches, king and subjects, shepherd and flock, father and children, brother and brother, husband and wife, &c. all is here; John xvii. 21; 22, 23. 26. "And they all shall be one, as thou, Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hath loved them, as thou hast loved me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou

hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." So that whatsoever be spoken in scripture, people may be clear that God calleth them to be reconciled unto him through Christ, and doth offer himself to be their God and husband in him alone; and men are to accept God to be their God in Christ, choosing that way of relief for poor man, and to give up themselves unto God in Christ in whom alone they can be accepted. And they who close with Christ, they do close with God in him, "who is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. John xiv. 8, 9, 10, 11. And we are not to dip further into the divers relations mentioned in scripture between God, or Christ, and men, than as they may point out union and communion, or nearness with God through Christ Jesus, and our advantage thereby.

These things being clear, we will not multiply words: but since to believe on Christ is the great duty required of all that hear this gospel, we beseech every one in the Lord's name, to whom the report of this shall come, that without delay, they take to heart their lost condition in themselves; and that they lay to heart the relief which God hath provided by Jesus Christ, whereof he hath made a free offer unto all who will be content with the same, and to be saved that way; and that they lay to heart, that there is no other way of escape from the wrath that is to come, because of which men would be glad, at the last day, to run into a lake of molten lead, to be hid from the face of the lamb, whom they do here despise; we say we beseech all, in the consideration of these things, to work up their

hearts to this business, and to lay themselves open for God, and to receive him through Christ in the offers of the gospel, acquiescing in him as the only desirable and satisfying good, that so they may secure themselves. Go speedily and search for his offers of peace and salvation in the scripture, and work up your heart and soul to close with them, and with Christ in them, and with God in Christ; and do it so, as you may have this to say, that you were serious, and in earnest, and cordial here, as ever you were in any thing to your apprehension: and, for ought you know, Christ is the choice of your heart, at least you neither know nor allow any thing to the contrary; whereupon your heart doth appeal unto God to search and try if there be ought amiss, to rectify it, and lead into the right way.

Now, this cleaving of the heart unto him, and resting itself upon him, to be saved in his way, is believing; which doth indeed secure a man from the wrath that is to come, because now he hath received Christ, and believeth on him, and so shall not enter into condemnation, as saith the scripture.

Objector. When I hear what it is to believe on Christ Jesus, I think sometimes I have faith; for I dare say to my apprehension, I am pleased with the invention of saving sinners by Christ Jesus; my heart goeth out after him, and doth terminate upon him as a satisfying treasure; and I am glad to accept God to be my God in him; but I often do question if ever I have done so, and so am, for the most part, kept hesitating and doubting if I do believe or be savingly in covenant with God.

Answ. It is ordinary for many, whose hearts are gone out after Christ in the gospel, and have received him, to bring the same in question again: therefore I shall advise one thing, as a notable help to fix the soul in the maintaining faith and an interest in God, and that is, that men not only close heartily with God in Christ, as is said, but also, that they expressly, explicitly, by word of mouth, and formally close with Christ Jesus, and accept God's offer of salvation through him, and so make a covenant with God." And this, by God's blessing, may contribute not a little for establishing them concerning their saving interest in God.

Before I speak directly to this express covenanting with God, I premise these few things, viz. I do not here intend a covenanting with God essentially differing from the covenant between God and the visible church, as the Lord doth hold it out in his revealed will: neither do I intend a covenant differing essentially from the transacting of the heart with God in Christ, formerly spoken unto: it is that same covenant, only it differeth by a singular circumstance, viz. the formal expression of the thing which the heart did before practice.

2dly. I grant this express covenanting and transacting with God is not absolutely necessary for a man's salvation; for if any person close heartily and sincerely with God, offering himself in Christ in the gospel, his soul and state is thereby secured, according to the scripture, although he utter not words with his mouth: but this express verbal covenanting with God is very expedient, for the better being of a man's state, and

his more comfortable maintaining of an interest in Christ Jesus.

3dly. This express covenanting with God by word of mouth is of no worth without sincere heart-closing with God in Christ joined with it; for without that, it is but a profaning of the Lord's name, and a mocking of him to his face, so "to draw near unto him with the lips, whilst the heart is far away from him."

4thly. I grant, both cordial and verbal transacting with God will not make one a man's gracious estate unto him, so as to put and keep it above controversy, without the joint witness of the spirit, by which we know what is freely given unto us of God; yet this explicit way of transacting with God, joined with that heart-closing with him in Christ contributes much for clearing up unto a man that there is a fixed bargain between God and him, and will do much to ward off him many groundless jealousies and objections of an unstable mind and heart, which useth affrontedly to deny this hour what it did really act and perform the former hour. This explicit covenanting is as an instrument taken of what passed between God and the soul, and so hath its own advantage for strengthening of faith.

As for this express covenanting, we shall 1st, shew, that it is a very warrantable practice. 2dly, We shall shew shortly what is preparatorily required of those who do so transact with God. 3dly, How men shall go about that duty. 4thly, What should follow thereupon.

As to the first, I say, it is a warrantable practice, and an incumbent duty, expressly laid by

word to covenant with God: which appeareth thus:

1st. In many places of scripture, if we look to what they may bear, according to their scope, and the analogy of faith, God hath commanded it, and left it on people as a duty; Isa. xliv. 5. "One shall say, I am the Lord's." Isa. xlv. 24. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Jer. iii. 4. "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, my Father, thou art the guide of my youth." Zech. xiii. 9. "They shall say, the Lord is my God." Hosea ii. 16. "Thou shalt call me Ishi;" and in many places elsewhere. Now since God hath so clearly left it on men in the letter of the word, they may be persuaded that it is a practice warranted and allowed by him, and well-pleasing unto him.

2d Argument. It is the approved practice of the saints in scripture thus expressly to covenant with God, and they have found much quiet in that duty afterwards. David did often expressly say unto God that he was his God, his portion, and that himself was his servant. Thomas will put his interest out of question with it, John xx. 28. "And Thomas answered and said unto him, my Lord, and my God." Yea, I say, the saints are much quieted in remembrance of what hath passed that way between God and them; Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." Psal. cxlii. 5. I cried unto thee, O Lord, I said, Thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living. We find it often so in the book of the Canticles. Now, shall the

chief worthies of God be so much in a duty breeding so much quiet and satisfaction to them in many cases, and shall we, under the New Testament, unto whom access is ministered abundantly, and who partake of the sap of the olive; shall we, I say, lie behind in this approved piece of intimacy with God? Since we study to imitate that cloud of witnesses in other things, as faith, zeal, patience, &c. let us also imitate them in this.

3d Argument. The thing about which we move here, is a matter of the greatest concernment in all the world: It is the life of our soul, Deut. xxxii. 47. Oh! shall men study to be express, explicit, plain, and peremptory, in all their other great businesses, because they are such; and shall they not much more be peremptory and express in this, which doth most concern them? I wonder that many not only do speak it with their mouth, but that they do not swear and subscribe it with their hand, and do not every thing for securing of God to themselves in Christ, and themselves unto God, which the scripture doth warrant, Isaiah xliv. 5.

This also may have its own weight, as an argument to press this way of covenanting with God, that the business of an interest in Christ, and of real and honest transacting with him, is a thing which in the experience of saints, is most frequently brought upon debate and in question; therefore men had need all the ways they can, even by thought, word and deed, to put it to a point.

This also may have place here for pressing this as a duty, that God is so formal, express,

distinct, and legal, to say so, in all the business of man's salvation, viz. Christ must be a near kinsman, to whom the right of redemption doth belong; he must be chosen, called, authorized and sent; covenants formerly drawn between the father and him, the father accepting payment and satisfaction, giving formal discharges, all done clearly and expressly. Shall the Lord be so express, plain and peremptory in every part of the business, and shall our part of it rest in a confused thought, and we be as dumb beasts before him? If it were a marriage between man and wife, it would not be judged enough, although there were consent in heart given by the woman, and known to the man, if she did never express so much by word, being in a capacity to do so. Now, this covenant between God and man is held out in scripture as a "marriage between man and wife." Hosea ii. 19, 20. 2 Cor. xi. 2. The whole song of Solomon speaketh it. The Lord useth similitudes, to signify unto us what he intends; and surely this a special requisite in marriage, that the wife give an express and explicit consent unto the business; the man saith, "So I take thee to be my lawful wife, and do oblige myself to be a dutiful husband;" The woman is obliged on the other part, to express her consent, and to say, "Even so I take thee to be my lawful husband, and do promise duty and subjection." It is so here; the Lord saith, "I do betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt call me Ishi." That is my husband, Hosea ii. 16. 20. I will be for thee as a head and husband, if thou wilt not be for another, Hosea iii. 3. The man ought to

answer and say, Amen, so be it, thou shalt be my God, my head, and Lord, and I shall and will be thine, and not for another; Cant. vi. 8. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." And so this making of the covenant with God is called, "a giving of the hand to him," as the word is, 2 Chron. xxx. 8.; which doth hint a very express, formal, explicit, and positive bargaining with God. So then we conclude it to be an incumbent duty, and a very approved practice, necessary for the quieting of a man's mind, and his more comfortable being in covenant with God, and more fully answering God's condescension and offer in that great and primary promise, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people."

Not only may and should people thus expressly close with God in Christ, for fixing their heart; but they may upon some occasions, renew this verbal transaction with God, especially when, through temptations, they are made to question if ever they have really and sincerely closed covenant with God. As they are then to put out new acts of faith, embracing Christ as the desirable portion and treasure, and also upon other occasions, so it were expedient, especially if there remain any doubt concerning the thing, that by their voice and express word they determine that controversy, and "say of the Lord, and to him, that he is their refuge and portion," Psal. xci. 2. Psal. cxlii. 5. We find the saints doing so; and we may imitate them. Especially,

1st, In the time of great backsliding, people were wont to renew the covenant with God, and

we should do so also. Our heart should go out after Christ in the promises of reconciliation with God; for he is our peace upon all occasions, and our advocate; and we are bound to apprehend him so, when we transgress; 1 John ii. 1. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and to express so much by word, as the saints did, in their formal renewing of the covenant.

2dly. When people are in hazard, and difficulties are present or foreseen, then it were good that they should send out their heart after him, and express their adhering unto him, for securing their own heart. We find Joshua doing so when he was to settle in the land of Canaan, in the midst of snares, Joshua xxiv.; so David doth in his straits, Psal. lvii. 1. "In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."

3dly. When men apprehend God to be at a distance from them, and their soul to be under withering and decay, then it is safest heartily to close with Christ and embrace him by faith for the securing of the soul; and it were good to put it out of question by the expression of the thing. This is the ready way to draw sap from Christ, the root, for recovering of the soul, and for establishing the heart before him. The spouse, in the Song of Solomon, doth so, thus asserting her interest in him when in such a condition, professing and avowing him to be her beloved, Cant. v.

4thly. At the celebration of the Lord's Supper, men should thus cordially close with God in Christ, and speak and express so much: for

that is a feast of love; and then and there we come under a solemn profession of closing with God in Christ, personally and openly, and do receive the seal of it. It is therefore beseeming, at that time, to bring up both heart and tongue to second and answer our profession, apprehending God to be our God, and resigning over ourselves to be his, and at his disposing.

We shall not confine the Lord's people to times and seasons of this duty, the Lord may bind it upon them at his pleasure; only there is hazard, that by too frequent express covenanting with God, men turn too formal in it. Therefore it is not so fit that people should ordinarily at full length renew that explicit transaction with God, but rather to declare unto God that they adhere unto the covenant made with him, and that they do maintain and will never revoke nor recall the same: and withal, they may hint the sum of it, in laying claim unto God in Christ as their own God; and this they may do often, even in all their addresses to God. And probably this is the thing designed by the saints in their so ordinary practice in scripture, whilst they assert their interest in God as their God and portion; and it is fit that men, in all their walk, hold their heart at the business, by heart-cleaving to God in Christ. "The life we live in the flesh should be by faith in the Son of God," Gal. ii. 20.

As to the second thing, viz. what is preparatorily required of him who is expressly to transact with God here. Beside what we spake before, as previous to a man's closing with Christ Jesus, we only add, 1st, That he who would

Lord according to their own fancy, and so turn carnal in the business, since it is a marriage transaction held out in all the ordinary expressions of love, as in the Song of Solomon, Isaiah lxii. 5. Zeph. iii. 17.

The fourth thing we shall speak a word unto is, what should follow upon this express verbal covenanting with God. I say, beside that union and communion with God in Christ, following upon believing, if a man explicitly by word transact with God.

1st. He should thenceforth be singularly careful to abide close with God in all manner of conversation; for, if a man thenceforth do any thing unsuitable, he doth falsify his word before God, which will stick much in his conscience, and prove a snare. If a man henceforth know not God, and take on him to dispose of himself, since he is not his own, and hath opened his mouth unto the Lord, he makes inquiry after vows, and devoureth that which is holy, Prov. xx. 25.

2dly. He who so transacteth with God should hold steadfast that determination and conclusion. It is a shame for a man, whose heart hath closed with God, and whose mouth hath ratified and confirmed it solemnly before him, to contradict himself again, and to admit any thing to the contrary; he ought boldly to maintain the thing against all deadly.

Then, let me obtest you, who desire to be established in the matter of your interest in God, that, with all conveniency, you set apart a piece of time for prayer before God, and labouring to work up your heart to seriousness, affection, and

the faith of the duty, to make a covenant, and to transact with God by express words, after this manner.

"O Lord, I am a lost and broken creature by nature, and by innumerable actual transgressions, which I do confess particularly before thee this day; and although being born within the visible church, I was from the womb in covenant with thee, and had the same sealed to me in baptism; yet, for a long time, I have lived without God in the world, senseless and ignorant of my obligation, by virtue of that covenant. Thou hast at length discovered unto me, and bound upon my heart, my miserable state in myself, and hast made manifest unto my heart the satisfying relief thou hast provided by Jesus Christ, offering the same freely unto me, upon condition that I would accept of the same, and would close with thee as my God in Christ, warranting and commanding me, upon my utmost peril, to accept of this offer, and to flee unto Christ Jesus; yea, to my apprehension, now thou hast sovereignly determined my heart, and shaped it for Christ Jesus, leading it out after him in the offers of the gospel causing me approach unto the living God, to close so with him, and to acquiesce in his offer, without any known guile. And that I may come up to that establishment of spirit in this matter, which should be to my comfort, and the praise of thy glorious grace; therefore, I am here this day to put that matter out of question by express words before thee, according to thy will. And now I, unworthy as I am, do declare, that I believe that Christ Jesus, who was slain at Jerusalem, was the Son of God, and the Saviour

of the world; I do believe that record, that there is life eternal for men in him, and in him only. I do this day in my heart please and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners by him, and do intrust my soul unto him; I do accept of reconciliation with God through him, and do close with thee as my God in him; I choose him in all that he is, and all that may follow him, and do resign up myself, and what I am, or have, unto thee; desiring to be divorced from every thing hateful unto thee, and that without exception, or reservation, of any thing consistent with my knowledge, or intended reversion. Here I give the hand to thee, and do take all things about me witnesses, that I, whatever I be or have hitherto been, do accept of God's offer of peace through Christ; and do make a sure covenant with thee this day, never to be reversed, hoping that thou wilt make all things forthcoming, both on thy part and mine, seriously begging, as I desire to be saved, that my corruptions may be subdued, and my neck brought under thy sweet yoke in all things, and my heart made cheerfully to acquiesce in whatsoever thou dost unto me, or with me, in order to these ends. Now, glory be unto thee, O Father, who deviseth such a salvation, and gave the son to accomplish it: Glory be to Christ Jesus, who at so dear a rate did purchase the outletting of that love from the Father's bosom, and through whom alone this access is granted, and in whom I am reconciled unto God, and honourably united unto him, and am no more an enemy or stranger: glory to the Holy Ghost, who did alarm me when I was destroying myself, and who did not only

convince me of my hazard, but did also open my eyes to behold the relief provided in Christ; yea, and did persuade and determine my wild heart to fall in love with Christ, as the enriching treasure; and this day doth teach me how to covenant with God, and how to appropriate to myself all the sure mercies of David, and blessings of Abraham, and to secure to myself the favour and friendship of God forever. Now, with my soul, heart, head, and whole man, as I can, I do acquiesce in my choice this day, henceforth resolving not to be my own, but thine; and that the care of whatsoever concerns me shall be on thee, as my head and Lord: protesting humbly, that failings on my part (against which I resolve, thou knowest) shall not make void this covenant; for so hast thou said, which I intend not to abuse, but so much the more to cleave close unto thee, and I must have liberty to renew, ratify, and draw extracts of this transaction, as often as shall be needful. Now, I know thy consent to this bargain stands recorded in scripture, so as I need no new signification of it; and I having accepted of thy offer upon thy own terms, will henceforth wait for what is good, and for thy salvation in end. As thou art faithful, pardon what is amiss in my way of doing the thing, and accept me, in my sweet Lord Jesus, in whom I only desire pardon. And in testimony hereof, I set to my seal that God is true, in declaring him a competent Saviour."

Let people covenant with God in fewer or more words, as the Lord shall dispose them; for we intend no platform of words for any person;

only it were fitting that men should before the Lord acknowledge their lost state in themselves, and the relief that is by Christ; and they do declare that they accept of the same as it is offered in the gospel, and do thankfully rest satisfied with it, instructing themselves henceforth wholly unto God, to be saved in his way, for which they wait according to his faithfulness.

If men would heartily and sincerely do this, it might, through the Lord's blessing, help to establish them against many fears and jealousies; and they might date some good thing from this day and hour, which might prove comfortable unto them when they fall in the dark afterwards, and even when many failings do stare them in the face, perhaps at the hour of death; 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "These be the last words of David—Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." It is much if a man can appeal unto God, and say, Thou knowest there was a day and an hour when in such a place I did accept of peace through Christ, and did deliver up my heart to thee, to write on it thy whole law without exception; heaven and earth are witnesses of it. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope," Psal. cxix. 49.

Object. I dare not adventure to speak such words unto God, because I find not my heart coming up full length in affection and seriousness; so I should but lie unto God, in transacting so with him.

Answ. It is to be regretted that men's heart doth not, with much vigour of desire and affection, embrace and welcome that blessed offer and portion. Yet for answer to the objection, remember, (1.) That in those to whom the Lord giveth the new heart, forming Christ in them, the whole heart is not renewed; there is "flesh and spirit lusting against each other, the one contrary unto the other, so as a man can neither do the good or evil he would do" with full force, Gal. v. 17. It is well if there be a good part of the heart going out after Christ, desiring to close with him on his own terms.

(2.) That there is often a rational love in the heart unto Christ Jesus, expressing itself by a respect to his commandments; 1 John v. 3. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." When there is not a sensible prevailing love which maketh the soul sick; Cant. ii. 5. "I am sick of love;" men must not always expect to find this. I say then, although somewhat in your heart draw back, yet if you can say that you are convinced of your broken state without him, that you want a righteousness to cover your guilt, and that you want strength to stand out against sin, or to do what is pleasing before God, and that you also see fulness in him, both these respects, if you dare say, that somewhat within your heart would be fain at him upon his own terms, and would have both righteousness for justification, and strength in order to sanctification; and that what is within you contradicting this is your burden in some meas-

ure, and your bondage: if it be so, your heart is brought up a tolerable length; go on to the business, and determine the matter by covenanting with God, and say with your mouth, "that you have both righteousness and strength in the Lord," as he hath sworn you shall do, Isa. xlv. 23, 24. It is approved divinity to say unto God, I believe, when much misbelief is in me, and the heart divided in the case; Mark ix. 24. "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Withal, shew unto God how matters are in your heart, that so you may be without guile before him, concealing nothing from him; and put your heart as it is in his hand, to write his law on it, according to the covenant: for that is the thing he seeks of men, that they deliver up their heart to him, that he may stamp it with his whole will, without exception; and if you can heartily consent unto that, judging Christ's blood a sufficient ransom and satisfaction for man's transgression, you may go and expressly strike covenant with God, for your heart and affection is already engaged.

OBJECT. I dare not so covenant with God, lest I break to him; yea, I persuade myself, that if such a temptation did offer, so and so circumstantiated, I would fall before it and succumb: therefore, to transact so with God whilst I foresee such a thing, were but to aggravate my condemnation.

ANSW. (1.) You have already entered covenant with God, as you are a member of his visible church; and what is now pressed upon you is, but that you more heartily, sincerely, particular-

ly, and more expressly covenant and transact with him: you are already obliged heartily to close with God in Christ, and if you do it in heart, I hope the hazard is no greater by saying that you do so, or have done so.

(2.) What will you do if you shift hearty transacting with God in Christ, and do not accept his peace as it is offered? You have not a second of it in the world; either you must do this or perish forever: and if you do it with your heart, you may also say it with your tongue.

(3.) If people are afraid of covenanting with God, because they will afterwards transgress, then not one man should covenant with God; for surely every one will transgress afterwards, if they live any length of time after the transaction: and we know no way like this to secure men from falling; for if you covenant honestly with him, he engageth, beside the new heart, to put his fear and law therein, to give his spirit to cause you to walk in his way. And when you covenant with God, you deliver up yourself unto him, to be sanctified and made conformable to his will. It is rather a giving up of yourself to be led in his way in all things, and kept from every evil way, than any formal engagement on your part to keep his way, and to hold off from evil: so that you need not be frightened at the covenant, the language whereof is, "wilt thou not be made clean?" Jer. xiii. 27. And all that shun to strike covenant with God, do thereby declare that they desire not to be made clean.

(4.) As it is hard for any to say confidently they will transgress, if such a temptation did of-

fes, so and so circumstantiated; because men may think that either God will keep a temptation out of their way, or not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, or give to them a way of escape; Psal. xlvi. 1, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." 1 Cor. x. 13. "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." So the question is not, what I may do afterwards; but what I now resolve to do? If my heart charge me presently with any deceit or resolution to transgress, I must lay aside that deceit before I transact with God; but if my heart charge me with no such purpose, yea, I dare say I resolve against every transgression; and although I think I will fall before such and such a temptation, yet that thought floweth not from any allowed and approved resolution to do so, but from knowledge of my own corruption, and of what I have done to provoke Christ to desert me; but the Lord knows I resolve not to transgress, nor do I approve any secret inclination of my heart to such a sin, but would reckon it my singular mercy to be kept from sin in such a case; and I judge myself a wretched man, because of such a body of death within me, which doth threaten to make me transgress; in that case, I say, "my heart doth not condemn me, therefore I may and ought to have confidence before God," 1 John iii. 21.; if this then be the

case, I say to thee, although thou shouldst afterwards fail many ways, and so perhaps draw upon thyself sad temporal strokes thereby, and lose for a season many expressions of his love: yet "there is an advocate with the Father to plead thy pardon," 1 John ii. 1. who hath satisfied for our breaches; Isaiah liii. 5, 6. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." And for his sake, God resolveth to hold fast the covenant with men after their transgression; Psal. lxxxix. 30—37. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments—Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness."—Else how could he be said to betrothe us unto himself forever?" Hosea ii. 19, 20. And how could the covenant be called "everlasting, ordered in all things and sure," if there were not ground of comfort in it, "even when our house is not so and so with God?" 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Yea, it were no better than the covenant of works, if these who enter it with God could so depart from him again, as to make it void unto themselves, and to put themselves into a worse

condition than they were in before they made it: Jer. xxxii. 40. "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good" compared with Heb. viii. 6. "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much more also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises," Mal. ii. 16. "The Lord hateth putting away." No honest heart will stumble on this, but will rather be strengthened thereby in duty; Hos. xiv. 4. to the end, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him—Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them." For other ties and bonds, beside the fear of divorce, and punishment by death, do oblige the ingenuous wife unto duty; so here men will "fear the Lord and his goodness," Hosea iii. 5.

OBJECT. I have, at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and at some other occasions covenanted expressly and verbally with God; but my fruitlessness in his ways, and the renewed jealousies of my gracious state, maketh me question if ever I transacted with God in sincerity, and I think I cannot do it no otherwise than I have done it.

ANSW. (1.) Men are not to expect fruitfulness according to their desire, nor full assurance of God's favour immediately after they have fled unto Christ, and expressly transacted with God in him: these things will keep a man on work all his days. The saints had their failings and

shortcomings, yea, and backslidings, with many fits of dangerous misbelief, after they had very seriously and sincerely, and expressly closed with God, as their God in Christ.

(2.) Many do look for fruitfulness in their walk, and establishment of faith, from their own sincerity in transacting with God, rather than from the spirit of the Lord Jesus. They place their heart in their own honesty and resolutions, and not in the blessed root Christ Jesus, without whom we can do nothing, and are vanity altogether in our best estate. Men should remember, that one piece of grace cannot produce any degree of grace; further, nothing can work grace but the arm of JEHOVAH; and if men would lean unto Christ, and covenant with him as their duty absolutely, whatsoever may be the consequence, at least, looking only to him for the suitable fruit, it should fare better with them. God pleaseth not that men should betake themselves unto Christ, and covenant with him for a season, until they see if such fruit and establishment shall follow, purposing to disclaim their interest in him and the covenant, if such and such fruit doth not appear within such a length of time. This is to put the ways of God to trial, and is very displeasing unto him. Men must absolutely close with Christ, and covenant with him, resolving to maintain these things as their duty, and a ready way to reach fruit, whatsoever shall follow thereupon; they having a testimony within them, that they seriously design conformity to his revealed will in all things;

and that they have closed covenant with him for the same end, as well as to be saved thereby.

(3.) Men should be sparing to bring in question their sincerity in transacting with God, unless they can instruct the same, or have great presumptions for it. If you can instruct any deceit or guile in your transacting with him, you are obliged to disclaim and rectify it, and to transact with God honestly, and without guile: but if you know nothing of your deceit or guile in the day you did transact with him; yea, if you can say, that you did appeal unto God in that day that you dealt honestly with him, and intended not to deceive; and did obtest him, according to his faithfulness, to search and try if there was any crookedness in your way, and to discover it unto you, and heal it; "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting," Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.; and that afterwards you "came to the light, that your deeds might be manifest," John iii. 20, 21.; and if you can say that God's answers from his words to you, in so far as you could understand, were answers of peace and confirmations of your sincerity; yea, further, if you dare say, that if upon life and death you were again to transact with him, you can do no other way, nor intend more sincerity and seriousness than before; then I dare say unto thee, in the Lord's name thou ought not to question thy sincerity in transacting with God, but "to have confidence before God, since thy heart doth not condemn thee," 1. John iii. 21.; and thou art bound to believe that "God dealeth

uprightly with the upright man, and with the pure doth shew himself pure," Psal. xviii. 25, 26. If a man intend honesty, God will not suffer him to beguile himself; yea, the Lord suffereth no man to deceive himself, unless the man intend to deceive both God and men.

(4.) Therefore impute your unfruitfulness to your unwatchfulness and your misbelief, and impute your want of full assurance unto an evil heart of unbelief, helped by Satan to act against the glorious free grace of God; and charge not these things upon want of sincerity in your closing with Christ. And resolve henceforth to abide close by the root, and you shall bring forth more fruit; and by much fruit you lay yourself open to the witness of God's spirit, which will testify with your spirit that you have sincerely and honestly closed with God, and that the rest of your works are wrought in God, and approved of him; and so the witness of the spirit and the water joining with the blood, whereupon you are to lay the weight of your soul and conscience, and where alone you are to sink the curses of the law due unto you for all your sins, and failings in your best things; these three do agree in one, viz. that this is the way of life and peace, and that your have interest therein, and so you come to quietness and full assurance; John xv. 4, 5. "Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing," John xiv. 21. 23. "He that hath

my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—Rom. viii. 16. "The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." 1 John v. 8. "There are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one."

O blessed bargain of the new covenant, and thrice blessed Mediator of the same! Let him ride prosperously, and subdue nations and languages, and gather in all his jewels, that honourable company of the first born, that stately troop of kings and priests whose glory it shall be to have washed their garments in the blood of that spotless Lamb, and whose happiness shall continually flourish in following him whithersoever he goeth, and in being in the immediate company of the ancient of days, one sight of whose face shall make them in a manner forget that ever they were in the earth. Oh if I could persuade men to believe that these things are not yea and nay, and to make haste towards him, who hasteth to judge the world, and to call men to an account, especially concerning their improvement of this gospel. "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

THE WHOLE TREATISE RESUMED IN A FEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

Quest. What is the great business a man hath to do in the world?

Answ. To make sure a saving interest in Christ Jesus, and to walk suitably thereunto.

Q. 2. Have not all the members of the visible church a saving interest in Christ?

A. No verily; yea, but a very few of them have it.

Q. 3. How shall I know if I have a saving interest in him?

A. Ordinarily the Lord prepareth his own way in the soul by a work of humiliation, and discovereth a man's sin and misery to him, and exerciseth him so therewith, that he longs for the physician Christ Jesus.

Q. 4. How shall I know if I have got a competent discovery of my sin and misery?

A. A competent sight of it makes a man take salvation to heart above any thing in this world: it maketh him disclaim all relief in himself, even in his best things: it maketh Christ, who is the Redeemer, very precious to the soul: it makes a man stand in awe to sin afterwards, and makes him content to be saved upon any terms God pleaseth.

Q. 5. What other ways may I discern a saving interest in him?

A. By the going out of my heart seriously and affectionately towards him, as he is held out in the gospel; and this is faith or believing.

Q. 6. How shall I know if my heart goeth out after him aright, and that my faith is true saving faith?

A. Where the heart goeth out aright after him in true and saving faith, the soul pleaseth Christ alone above all things, and pleaseth him in all his three offices, to rule and instruct as well as to save, and is content to cleave unto him, whatsoever inconveniences may follow.

Q. 7. What other mark of a saving interest in Christ can you give to me?

A. He that is in Christ savingly is a new creature, he is graciously changed and renewed, in some measure, in the whole man, and in all his ways pointing towards all the known commands of God.

Q. 8. What if I find sin now and then prevailing over me?

A. Although every sin deserveth everlasting vengeance, yet if you be afflicted for your failings, confess them with shame of face unto God, resolving to strive against them honestly henceforth, and flee unto Christ for pardon, you shall obtain mercy, and your interest stands sure.

Q. 9. What shall the man do who cannot lay claim to Christ Jesus, nor any of those marks spoken of?

A. Let him not take rest until he make sure unto himself a saving interest in Christ.

Q. 10. What way can a man make sure an interest in Christ, who never had a saving interest in him hitherto?

A. He must take his sins to heart, and his great hazard thereby; and he must take to heart God's offer of pardon and peace through Christ Jesus, and heartily close with God's offer, by betaking himself unto Christ the blessed refuge.

Q. 11. What if my sins be singularly heinous, and great beyond ordinary?

A. Whatsoever thy sins be, if thou wilt close with Christ Jesus by faith, thou shalt never enter into condemnation.

Q. 12. Is faith in Christ only required of men?

A. Faith is the only condition upon which God doth offer peace and pardon unto men; but be assured, faith, if it be true and saving, will not be alone in the soul, but will be attended with true repentance, and a thankful study of conformity to God's image.

Q. 13. How shall I be sure that my heart doth accept of God's offer, and doth close with Christ Jesus?

A. Go make a covenant expressly, and by word speak the thing unto God.

Q. 14. What way shall I do that?

A. Set apart some portion of time, and having considered your own lost estate, and the relief offered by Christ Jesus, work up your heart to please and close with that offer, and say unto God expressly, that you do except of that offer, and of him to be your God in Christ; and do give up yourself to him to be saved in his way, without reservation or exception in any case: and that you henceforth will wait for salvation in the way he hath appointed.

Q. 15. What if I break unto God afterwards?

A. You must resolve on his strength not to

break and watch over your own way, and put your heart in his hand to keep it: and if you break you must confess it unto God, and judge yourself for it, and flee to the advocate for pardon, and resolve to do no more so: and this you must do as often as you fail.

Q. 16. How shall I come to full assurance of my interest in Christ, so as it may be above controversy?

A. Learn to lay your weight upon the blood of Christ, and study purity and holiness in all manner of conversation; and pray for the witness of God's spirit to join with the blood and the water; and his testimony added unto these will establish you in the faith of an interest in Christ.

Q. 17. What is the consequence of such closing with God in Christ by heart and mouth?

A. Union and communion with God, all good here, and his blessed fellowship in heaven forever afterwards.

Q. 18. What if I slight all these things, and do not lay them to heart to put them in practice?

A. The Lord cometh with his angels in flaming fire, to render vengeance to them who obey not this gospel; and thy judgment shall be greater than the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah; and so much the greater that thou hast read this treatise, for it shall be witness against thee in that day.

FINIS.